# ELIZABETHTOWN

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The music of The Hollies' "Jesus Was A Crossmaker" begins. It's a quiet, stately song, fit for an ending. And though this is only the beginning, perhaps we sense something grand and final is about to occur.

FADE IN:

A LARGE INDUSTRIAL TRUCK

backs into a close shot. Mighty steel doors swing upward to reveal an entire truck full of shoe boxes. Many, many boxes of shoes, marked with a loud black stamp: RECALL. Camera slides right, as another gleaming truck opens its back doors to reveal similar cargo. And another. And another. Two dock-workers share a rueful, knowing look.

DOCK WORKER # 1
(to the shoes)
Welcome back, boys.

They begin the task of unloading this colossal shipment.

VOICE
As somebody once said, there is a difference between a failure...

HIGH-ANGLE

Twenty-two trucks unloading the shoe boxes. We are on the outskirts of the gorgeous "campus" of a famous shoe company whose world headquarters are right here in the wilds of Oregon, just outside Portland.

VOICE
... and a *fiasco.*

INT. MERCURY SHOE CORPORATE HELICOPTER - DAY

**DREW BAYLOR** is 27. He sits rigidly upright, a man facing his destiny, even though he's seated backwards. He's the only passenger in this company helicopter whistling over the tops of tall Oregon trees. In the distance, the magnificent Mount Hood. Drew looks at the large open side-window to the helicopter. It beckons, a tempting way out.

EXT. MERCURY SHOE HEADQUARTERS – DAY – HIGH ANGLE

The speck that is Drew now exits the still-whirring helicopter which has just touched down at the top of the tallest building of this important-looking compound. The voice continues helpfully, calm but resigned.

VOICE
A failure is simply the non-presence of success.
Any *fool* can accomplish failure.

PILOT
Watch your head –

Drew looks upwards at the slicing helicopter blades.

DREW
(unconvincing)
I'm fine.

INT. MERCURY SHOE HEADQUARTERS – DAY

Drew wears a security i.d. badge as he walks the hallway. Young powerful types, all "casually" dressed, swivel back in chairs, frozen in mid-meeting as they see him. We know the look. It's our own look as we try hard not to gaze at a passing wreck on the highway.

VOICE
But a *fiasco*...

Drew arrives at another hallway juncture, a little unsure of his direction. He chooses the left path. He nods to people as he walks. Our narrator's thoughtful voice belongs to Drew, of course, and it stands in great contrast to his deceptively cheerful public front.

DREW'S VOICE
... a "fiasco" is a disaster of *mythic proportions*. A fiasco is a *folk-tale* told to others, that makes other people feel more alive... because *it didn't happen to them*.

DREW
(flatly)
I'm fine.

INT. MERCURY SHOES HALLWAY – DAY

Drew arrives at the desk of **ELLEN KISHMORE**, 24. She's a high-level assistant with great

style, poise, memorable green eyes and a few too many magazine photos of Jude Law on her cubicle wall. She greets Drew with a not-quite-disguised look of horrified concern. Frankly, she's shocked he's still on two feet. Just looking at Ellen almost comforts him.

ELLEN
L... I...

DREW
(quietly)
I'm fine.

At another time, they would have made clever small-talk, perhaps even openly discussed their eighteen-month affair. But there is no time for that now.

ELLEN
I'll take you to Phil so you don't get lost.

INT. CLOSED HALLWAY – DAY

Drew and Ellen zip down a corridor on a cart. Think about a long hallway at LAX, the kind with children's artwork on the sides. Replace the artwork with valuable masterpieces from American painters, and you've got the idea about this inner-sanctum passageway reserved for an elite few.

DREW'S VOICE
Mercury Worldwide Shoes... which is actually *Phil*...
contains some of America's finest artists' masterworks...
seen only by people heading for very important meetings,
a promotion...

Drew looks at Ellen with unabashed love. The paintings zip by. She looks at him with increasingly distant affection.

DREW'S VOICE
... or otherwise.

INT. "THE PEN" – DAY

Drew and Ellen pass "The Pen," an open work-space filled with desks and employees. Large monitors fill every desk. Such is the state of the new global workplace – all we see are the tops of their heads. (Visible are cutting-edge souvenirs and sign-posts of worldwide culture.)

DREW'S VOICE
We are not just employees, as Phil once said, we are
*"Denizens of Greatness."*

SERIES OF SHOTS – DREW'S WORK WORLD

1) Drew at monitor studying the leg and foot movements of animals.

DREW'S VOICE
Phil says – the world is full of those who coast through life, who achieve through negativity or *theft*.

2) Drew at a zoo studying the way a monkee jumps, taking notes.

DREW'S VOICE
We succeed through original thought. But there are sacrifices for a goal like pure *greatness*...

3) On a calendar.

DREW'S VOICE
... birthdays, major holidays...

4) Drew's family – father **MITCH**, mother **HOLLIE**, sister **HEATHER**, her daughter **ISIS**. Family gather at a table for Christmas. Drew, absent, is represented by a framed photo on a buffet table... and an empty seat.

DREW'S VOICE
... though we sometimes celebrate odd things at Mercury, like the day the Italians invented rubber. Which they *didn't*, of course, but that's beside the point.

5) "The Pen" is transformed into a pseudo-kegger. Drew, a non-dancer, dances wildly.

6) Drew on escalator at office. Shot splits into two... then four screens, then folds back into one large think-tank where Drew studies media and culture from around the world.

DREW'S VOICE
I once went four days without speaking. It was *fantastic*.

6) Drew at desk, on his phone, early morning.

DREW
David! How's the weather?

DREW'S VOICE
Each of us has a exact counterpart in the Region 3 Headquarters in Taiwan. Mine is named David Tan.

Every day, we download thoughts to each other –
we are two sides of the same brain-trust.

INT. TAIWAN OFFICE – NIGHT

**DAVID TAN**, 45, works long hours. Just the top of his head is visible behind his monitor.

DAVID TAN
Drew! How's the weather?

INT. PHIL'S OUTER OFFICE – DAY – PRESENT TIME

The cart slows to Phil's outer office. No words, no sign proclaiming his name. Just two frosted-glass doors.

DREW'S VOICE
Any true student of functional shoe design is also a student of Phil himself. He is a master. And his innate wisdom of what people want and need... has never failed to date. He is also obsessed with the number two.

A matching set of two Norman Rockwell paintings adorn the outer wall.

DREW'S VOICE
These are Phil's prized *two* Norman Rockwells, the pair of paintings that once hung outside the White House Office of John F. Kennedy....

We now see a matching set of two Security Guards in bulky jackets, attempting not to look ominous... which of course, makes them look *more* ominous. Security Guard # 1 (MEL) feels Drew's pain. They've bantered happily in the past. Today Mel sends him a solemn silent message of compassion.

DREW
(with little conviction)
I'm *fine*.

DREW'S VOICE
And yes, the two frosted doors Phil once purchased from a church on a vacation in Tunisia and had sent back home for a total cost too enormous to mention.
(confides)
$763,000. *Each.*

Two Older Assistants – Moneypenny types -- sit at two desks, nodding quietly as they listen over headsets. One of them holds up two fingers – as in *not yet*.

ASSISTANT # 1
Just two more minutes and I can send you in.

Drew nods, looking around, killing time before his date with destiny.

DREW'S VOICE
Because we have a moment here, let me tell you that I am a secret connoisseur of "last looks." The way people look at you when they believe it's for the last time... I collect these looks and...

ASSISTANT # 2
(interrupting voice-over)
Okay, he's ready for you.

Ellen sends Drew through the two frosted doors.

INT. PHIL'S OFFICE – DAY

Drew looks back to see Ellen quietly disappear on the other side of these frosted doors.

DREW'S VOICE
... there's one right now.

It somehow feels quite significant. Drew is now utterly alone. Well, *almost* alone. Phil's large office is sunlit, wide-open, and inside it... time has stopped. There is a collection of deeply-comfortable brown-leather chairs, two large-screen televisions featuring state-of-the-art video games abandoned in mid-pursuit, and at the far end corner, a sun-bathed figure sits thoughtfully looking out at the trees. Phil is waiting, and somehow Drew knows to approach carefully. To his left, a large-screen computer monitor *glugs* with the sound of a screen-saver aquarium.

PHIL
How are you, Drew?

DREW
I wanted to jump out the window of that helicopter, and just splatter on the trees, to tell you the truth.

PHIL
(half-hearted)
Don't do that. It's only money.

And it is rather clear in his cadence that money is maybe the *only* important thing in Phil's world. Drew has not been invited to sit in the empty chair next to Phil, so he stands. A young man in a very, very large space. If only he knew what to do, what to say. But he doesn't. Phil takes a single sip from each of two cups of tea that sit before him.

PHIL
The American psyche is in turmoil. And we have miscalculated.

DREW
I'm... sorry.

PHIL
I have no rule-book for this situation.
(blankly)
They tell me we're about to lose 972 million dollars.
I'm ill-equipped in the philosophies of failure.

INT. INDOOR GYMNASIUM – DAY

They walk together on the upper-tier observation platform. Below is a gymnasium floor, where a pro-Basketball team works out. Phil pauses briefly to regard these fine athletes.

PHIL
My basketball team. They don't even know yet.

INT. COURTYARD – DAY

Phil and Drew arrive in an indoor arboretum courtyard. The expanse of this company headquarters is consistently surprising.

DREW
I understand you have to let me go.

PHIL
(it's understood)
How do I make the concept of 972 million dollars more real to you?

DREW
It is *very real* to me, Phil.

This we know, as Phil begins to talk. He is a fan of his own mellifluous voice, particularly as he discusses the subject of money.

PHIL
(thoughtful)
Well. It's the operating budget of a mid-size country. A small civilization. It's big, it's so big that you could *round it off* to... a billion dollars.
(beat)
I cry a lot lately.

DREW
In every possible way, I feel responsible.

PHIL
(really not listening)
A hugely-successful American company, built by my own family, the *blood* of my own family, merging last year with DCS Industries on the promise of a global future pinned to a groundbreaking shoe -- *your* design – with a new style of material, launched this week to great fanfare and now meeting a growing international roar of laughter and rejection, enough to cause this memo from Jeffrey Barlow CEO of DCS, "this once highly-anticipated product may actually cause an entire generation to return to bare feet." We are about to enter a free-fall plunge. And the sound you hear is the sound of shit hitting the fan, globally.

Drew is stricken. For a moment we hear the whistling sound of wind.

DREW
I wish there was something I could do.

PHIL
Actually, there is.
(with suspicious compassion)
Sitting in a room downstairs is a reporter from *Modern Business Journal.* He's one of the good guys. He'll help us if he can. The story of our recall will break in a week, this Monday, and you know, whatever you want to say – within parameters – would be wonderful.

Drew takes it in. He is a loyal warrior to the end.

PHIL
For example, we need him to understand. We hired you from our National Scholarship program. We supported, *invested* in your brilliance. This was a very creative endeavor.
(pause).
And I think you should stand up for your incredible work.

Drew stares at his once fatherly role-model. Now Phil is all reflective surface, a false front of support. It looks like another last look, unmistakably so.

DREW
(as in goodbye)
Thank you.

PHIL
You okay?

Drew slowly nods. He wants to say "I'm fine," but can't quite get there.

DREW
I'm f...

INT. MERCURY SHOES HALLWAY – DAY

Drew arrives at the conference room door, flanked by Ellen and Mel (Security Guard # 1). It feels like an execution, and in fact it is. Drew stands at the door. Inside the Reporter waits. Drew looks down the long hallway, and considers running for freedom. It's too late.

DREW
Well Ellen...

He's about to say "wish me luck."

ELLEN
Drew. Phil asks that you not talk about him at all.

REW
At all?

ELLEN
(takes a breath)
He wants you to take all the... credit.

DREW
(privately)
You were wearing that jacket the first time I met you.

Ellen smiles distantly. Quietly, a lover's negotiation:

ELLEN
Are you going back tonight?

DREW
No I was gonna stay... that was the plan, right?

ELLEN
Plans change, Drew.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM – DAY

Drew faces the gimlet-eyed reporter, **HERBIE GONSALVES**, 46, a poker-faced professional. On the table before them are Drew's conceptual drawings of the now-infamous shoe. It is a boldly designed shoe, with a very wide base, festooned with criss-crossing colorful designs. We notice it's name in the sketches – Spasmotica. Nearby, a copy of last week's *Modern Business Journal*.

REPORTER
And did *Phil* approve the designs, and work closely with you on The Spasmotica?

DREW
(glumly)
Actually it's pronounced "Spaas-motica."

REPORTER
Of course, there's an "umlaut" – I'm sorry. So it's "spizz" or... "spowze"... ?

DREW
(evenly)
He set me free to do whatever I wanted.

The Reporter looks at Drew with pen suspended over a small-sized notebook. The smell of corporate violence is in the air. The pack needs to devour a wounded animal. Gonsalves offers one final chance for survival before writing a death sentence.

REPORTER
Your design, your vision... *completely*?

DREW

Completely.

REPORTER

And it came to you... in a crazy burst, or --

DREW

I developed it for eight years.
(voice trails)
Night and day.
(quieter)
It was... meant to approximate walking on a cloud.

REPORTER
(still not writing)
So you're the one.

DREW

I'm the one.

REPORTER

And that's B - a - i...?

DREW

B - a - y... l - o - r...

Drew's life flashes before him... several times. The Reporter sets pen to paper, shaking his head slightly as he scribbles in his notebook. Drew eyes his name being written upside-down, mesmerized by the scratching sound, and the enormity of the effect this small act will now have on his destiny.

DREW

When does this run? A week?

REPORTER

A week. Actually, six days... by Sunday evening it'll be on the stands... can you believe I don't have longer to write a piece like this? It's gonna be tough for me.

DREW

That's... that's too bad.

REPORTER
But for *you*. It's a little bit like knowing the plane is going down before anyone else, isn't it?
(still writing)
Do you know what you're going to do next?

DREW
(darkly)
I have some plans.

REPORTER
(looking up)
Any last words?

INT. MERCURY HEADQUARTERS – AFTERNOON

Ellen lingers a bit, putting a fresh security i.d. badge on a handsome new Recruit, as Drew passes.

DREW
(to Ellen)
Hey, so –

Ellen doesn't even look at Drew. He turns to see her hand seductively guide his replacement down the corridor. The movement of her hand on the recruit's back is mesmerizing in its brutal message. This is what it feels like to be *erased*.

ON GLASS JAR

Drew drops his security badge into the container by the exit. It clinks with finality.

ON DREW

watching Ellen walk away. He knows he's supposed to leave with dignity, knows this with every bone in his body... but instead, giving way to feelings of disbelief and anxiety, he moves in the opposite direction, towards her.

DREW
Hey – this is really silly. You probably don't realize how this is coming off.

Ellen turns, the panic of public embarrassment in her eyes. Two Mercury Guards now flank Drew, easing him backwards as co-workers watch.

DREW
I mean, this is sort of like you're blowing me off!

The guards deposit Drew on the other side of the tinted glass separating Mercury Shoes from the rest of the world. He stands alone, in near silhouette.

SUDDEN CUT TO

MOVING MEDIUM SHOT

Drew suddenly appears again on the other side of the tinted glass, moving alongside what he can barely make out of Ellen and the new recruit. (Theme indicates this as a "last look" at Ellen)

DREW
(muffled)
Ellen... listen... wait... !

EXT. MERCURY WINDOW – AFTERNOON

Drew is on the other side of the tinted glass. He cannot follow any further. He stands alone in the courtyard of the gorgeous campus, locked-out on this beautiful day, as casually dressed and oblivious employees move past him.

DREW'S VOICE
I found myself thinking about my Taiwanese counterpart in Region 3. David Tan. What would happen to him?

EXT. MERCURY BUILDING – AFTERNOON

Sunlight glints off the corner of the Mercury Tower.

DREW'S VOICE
(figuring it all out)
And in that moment I knew. Success – *success* – not greatness... was the only God the entire world served.

The sun disappears behind the building. Drew takes a last look at his former world, the courtyard, the people, a company trash-can, and finally himself in the reflected windows.

EXT. DREW'S APARTMENT – NIGHT

Drew walks up the steps, passing a cute Artsy Girl and her Boyfriend.

ARTSY GIRL
Oh Drew. We're having a party on Friday, so if you're home working, there will be noise.

DREW
(not a social animal)
Thanks.

INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY – NIGHT

Drew's personal ritual. He turns the key and shoves his shoulder into the front door just so. Door swings open, as theme begins.

INT. DREW'S APARTMENT – NIGHT

Drew shuts the door to his stark, smallish apartment. This is the solitary existence of a man who does not "entertain." It's dominated by a television, stacks of video games, and two framed Spasmotica prototypes (in different stages of painstaking development) on the wall. A laptop glows with a Spasmotica screensaver and some sketches sit on a small kitchen table. He sets down his things. He takes a look around, lets out a breath. Home sweet home.

INT. DREW'S KITCHEN – NIGHT

Drew's kitchen drawer opens, taking theme music out. Drew withdraws a Ginzu knife from the kitchen drawer. It's in a special case reading: "The Sharpest Knife in the World – As Advertised." The knife is long, thin, and *savage* with a serrated blade. We know this knife from late-night tv infomercials, where a burly chef first hurls tomatoes at the knife, which slices them cleanly, and then smoothly cuts steel with it. Drew feels the blade, auditions the act of plunging it deep into his chest. Yes, this is the right knife.

ON DREW

pulling a long-dormant exercise-bike into the center of the small living room.

ON HIS HANDS

pulling out a long strip of gaffer's tape from a spool.

ON THE KNIFE

being gaffer-taped into position by the speedometer.

ON WALL SOCKET

Drew plugs in the bike.

WIDER SHOT

Ever the designer, with focused intensity, Drew tests the efficiency of this machine before using it himself. He presses "on," and stands back to observe...

THE MACHINE

It bucks powerfully, the knife stabbing insistently into the air, into the exact spot where his heart will soon be.

ON DREW

He admires the clean efficiency of his suicide machine. Clearly, anyone seated in this machine will be the victim of a special kind of Hari-Kari. It works. It's perfect. He turns it off. Ah, but one thing is missing... and he knows what it is. Drew exits and returns with a pair of the villainous Spasmoticas. He ties the laces together and hangs them from the handlebars. *This* is perfection.

EXT. DREW'S APARTMENT – NIGHT

With the decision, has come freedom. With an almost skip in his step, Drew places a box of his clothes, a wicker chair, the television, videos, camera, and all his belongings by the trash bins behind his apartment.

INT. DREW'S APARTMENT – NIGHT – MINUTES LATER

Drew climbs into the seat. The place is neat, and empty. Now gripped with a real sense of purpose, he regards the "on" switch. We hear a very subtle chirp, an innocuous ascending ring. It's the hushed reminder that his cell-phone rests on the table nearby. It's not hard to ignore, so he does. The call goes to voice-mail with a final beep.

ON THE GAFFER'S TAPE

which weakens as the knife begins to droop. Drew adjusts the knife, adding more gaffer's tape. He is now completely focused and utterly centered. The phone chirps again. Drew doesn't hear it, as he takes a breath.

ON THE ON SWITCH

his finger rests on it.

And finally Drew becomes aware of the continuing ring. With zen-like calm, he rises and brings the phone back to his seat. He is completely at peace, almost cheerful:

DREW
Hello.

It's **HEATHER**, 25, his sister. Heather is ever-burdened-with-responsibility.

HEATHER'S VOICE
Drew, it's your sister. I have some really bad news.

Drew nods knowingly. Of *course* it's bad news. Is there any other kind of news?

DREW
Could you call me tomorrow?

HEATHER'S VOICE
No.

DREW
(extra pleasant)
Could you call me a little later?

HEATHER'S VOICE
No, honey.

He regards the "on" switch. It beckons.

DREW
Ten minutes?

HEATHER'S VOICE
Dad died.

This bad news is a deep physical blow. He goes limp with the impact.

HEATHER'S VOICE
(barreling forward)
He had a heart attack, back in Kentucky. He was still visiting Uncle Dale. Mom's in total shock. You've got to handle this --

Drew's eyes close. His back hunches. The day has now reached ghastly, unfathomably bad proportions. He listens to his sister's shaky voice.

INT. HEATHER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Heather sits at her kitchen table. A baby monitor is nearby, crackling with the sound of her child. Heather's face is frozen in a state of shock and panic.

HEATHER
– *you're* the responsible one. You're the oldest.

INT. DREW'S APARTMENT – NIGHT

Paralyzed, Drew sits absolutely still. He looks at the knife, which droops and falls to the floor. He looks out the window.

POV DREW

The alley. Three bums excitedly and jealously thrash through Drew's possessions. (Note: the frame actually spins slowly on an axis, his world literally *turning* – spinning like a small hallucination that creates this sharp return to reality as we... )

CUT TO:

INT. PORTLAND AIRPORT – NIGHT

**HOLLIE BAYLOR** is moving furiously forward through the Portland Airport terminal. At 57, Drew's mother still carries her collegiate good-looks and a school-girl's obsession with the biggest questions of life. Carefree people have often patted her on the shoulder and said, "Hey, just have a good time." But as we meet her, all her worst fears have come true. Into frame comes Heather, Drew's sister and now Drew himself, holding a garment bag and a backpack. It's a blizzard of adrenalized conversation. They are commandos trying to outrun grief.

HOLLIE
I'm a widow.... I'm a widow... I'm a widow...

HEATHER
It's okay, Mom. Drew has a plan.

DREW
(glazed, weary)
I have a plan.

HOLLIE
I don't know why he went back to Kentucky!
I don't know what the attraction was –

DREW
He was *born* there.

HOLLIE
They don't like me there, they never did.

HEATHER
Drew will take care of everything.
(to Drew)
Honey, you understand I can't go because of the baby.

DREW
I'll be back in two days.

HEATHER
*I'll man the phones.*

HOLLIE
I'll always be the one who "snatched" him away from them. The two sides of this family have never integrated well, so don't expect to make a lot of friends back there.

HEATHER
Drew doesn't *make* friends, Mom.

Drew stops.

DREW
(defensively)
*I have friends*!

They don't hear him. They've hurried on. He rushes to keep up.

HOLLIE
And you've got the Blue Suit. The navy blue –

DREW
(off garment bag)
I have the Blue Suit.

HEATHER
He loved that silly blue suit.

HOLLIE
God knows if I made him truly happy –

DREW
I'll call from Kentucky. I'll be there in the morning.

HEATHER
We have a plan.

HOLLIE
We have a plan.
(beat)
And you hold your head up high. Don't you forget... you go back there as the most successful man in the history of your family. Don't let them *try anything*.

Drew hoists the bag up, coughs a little. He has not shared the earlier failure of this day.

DREW
Is there *anything else* about what he said, how he wanted to be buried?

HOLLIE
He never wanted to talk about it!
(suddenly)
Wait. Wait... wait... I think he said *sprinkled at sea*!

DREW
Okay good. Sprinkled at sea!

HEATHER
We have a plan. We're working well together!

She gestures with her arm and knocks into a passerby.

HEATHER
Excuse me –

HOLLIE
Just tell them I'm too sad to fly. My God, I have to call people and clean out the office –

The Security Gate looms ahead. They stop.

HOLLIE
– I'm a widow.

HEATHER
(checking monitors)
We'll figure this out! We'll figure this out... just get dad home. Hurry.

Hollie looks at her son with a stunned expression. Suddenly she can't or won't let go of his arm.

HOLLIE
(dazed, fractured)
I was still waiting for everything to start and now it's over.

Drew kisses them both quickly.

DREW
I'll bring him home.

HOLLIE
Wait... get close... come here...

She pulls them together for a small huddle.

HOLLIE
What did Dad always say... ? "If it wasn't this –

ALL
– it would be something else."

The memory somehow grounds them.

HOLLIE
His spirit is still hovering, looking for a place to land...

ON DREW

looking upward.

HOLLIE
... *now go and do him justice*! And call and tell us everything! Go!

People are trying to get past their cluster hug. Drew pulls away, and is immediately vectored into Security lines.

ON DREW

in line. It occurs to him.

DREW
Hey wait! *How do we sprinkle him at sea in a blue suit?*

They cannot quite hear him. Drew turns and faces forward. Music matches the pulses of thoughts in his head. His consciousness revs.

DREW'S VOICE
The *Business Journal* article would run in six days.
I would go to Kentucky.

PULSE – THE PLANE TICKET

in his hand.

PULSE – THE SUIT

in his other hand.

DREW'S VOICE
Put my father in the Blue Suit, bring him home...

PULSE – DREW'S APARTMENT – FLASHBACK TO AN HOUR EARLIER

Drew regards the Suicide Exercise Machine. The Ginzu knife stands ready for duty. He shuts the door to the closet, and we stay with the shiny machine for an extra moment.

DREW'S VOICE
... and then get back on that bike.

INT. AIRPORT SECURITY AREA – NIGHT

Hollie and Heather stay for a last look, waving goodbye on the other side of the Security Checkpoint.

DREW'S VOICE
(absolutely resolute)
Nothing would stop The Plan.

INT. AIRPORT SECURITY AREA – NIGHT – ONE MINUTE LATER

Drew lifts the garment bag from the conveyor belt, and is immediately stopped by two Airport Security Guards.

GUARD # 1
Could you come with us for a second?

INT. ANOTHER SECURITY AREA – NIGHT

The two Guards search and interrogate Drew, as a third silent Guard in fatigues sits watching with a machine gun at his side. From time to time, he taps information into an open laptop.

GUARD # 2
You made this plane reservation at the last minute.

DREW
It's a family emergency.

Guard # 1 casts a knowing glance over at Guard # 2, *the "family emergency" line*. Guard # 2 finds a small pair of scissors, and shows it to Guard # 1. They look at each other meaningfully – the case against Drew is growing. They regard the tiny weapon like a bomb of epic proportions.

GUARD # 2
You're traveling with *this* –

DREW
Take it.

GUARD # 1
Have you ever attended school overseas?

DREW
One semester in Germany.

The Guards openly share their most powerful look yet. They look at the two very different suits in Drew's garment bag. One is a standard issue. The other is The Blue Suit. It immediately fascinates them. It's not quite in fashion, strangely anonymous. *Purposely anonymous*? The Guards flick looks to each other.

GUARD # 2

And this is *your* suit?

DREW

The suit belongs to my Dad.

GUARD # 2

(careful, skeptical)

And your "father's" going to wear this suit?

DREW

(evenly)

For *eternity*.

Beat. Suddenly they understand. And this issue, as Drew will soon find out, strikes a chord in all men, large and small. A silent moment passes between them. Guard # 2 gives Drew a sympathetic pat on the shoulder. Guard # 3 holds out the plastic container with the Beautiful You baggie. Drew takes it, acknowledging the most menacing guard's gesture of kindness. The three men share one last wordless moment in the security area. We hear the shimmering guitar introduction of the song that serve as a musical signpost for the movie, Claire's Theme.

EXT. AIRPORT PERSONNEL TRAM – NIGHT

A group of Southwest Airline employees move off the airport shuttle carrying bags. There is little glamour in their weary movements. Just another work force on the late-night shift. Shot finds a young woman, 25 or so, in casual clothes exiting with a roller suitcase. She steps out into a blast of summer heat, smoothing her clothes. Music continues as she leaves the real air behind and proceeds to enter the air-conditioned, timeless capsule of...

INT. PORTLAND AIRPORT – NIGHT

The Airport. She walks the thoroughfare. It's mostly empty, just a crying baby and a group of stray late-night passengers. She dutifully shows an armed guard her Airline security badge. There is little romance left in what was once a glamour profession. She took the job for freedom and travel. Lately she feels like a cop. She is **CLAIRE COLBURN**, built for travel, tired by nature, and she pauses to adjust her shoe.

INT. CHANGING STATION/LOCKERS – NIGHT

Claire opens her locker, changes into uniform. Just another night. Music continues.

INT. AIRPORT PEOPLE MOVER – NIGHT

Drew in close-up sitting with coffee. He is new to grief, and we can almost feel him burrowing

inward, retreating from the world. At the other end, Claire sits with headset. Her uniform is now on, along with her public front. Two travelers on very different courses. They don't ever see each other, as song continues.

INT. SOUTHWEST AIRLINE – NIGHT

We are airborne. Claire routinely mops up the sink in the galley of the plane, and surveys the passenger load. The plane is nearly empty, as her gaze passes to the right and left, seeing only three passengers in first, and then the center. One overhead light and one passenger at the very, *very* back.

ON DREW – HER DISTANT POV

He sits quietly.

CLOSER ON DREW

The thundering reality of all that happened today is starting to sink in. His eyes are fixed on a distant point, uncomprehending. He absently watches...

CLAIRE – HIS POV

The distant Flight Attendant takes the long trek, purposefully and with very good posture, all the way down the very long aisle to him. She lowers, down to his exact eye level.

CLAIRE
(mock professionalism)
Sir, by flying this flight, you've helped save all our jobs. Definitely mine, maybe even the entire airline. We would like to reward you with a free seat in first-class.

DREW
(distant)
I'm fine.

Claire looks at him. He doesn't get it. She shifts her body-language a bit.

CLAIRE
Okay – let me try it like this.
(more direct)
I'm really tired. Please don't make me keep walking all the way back here... all night long.

INT. FIRST-CLASS – NIGHT – MANY MINUTES LATER

He's sitting in a darkened first-class. She sits on the arm-rest across the aisle. He's getting ready to go to sleep, but she's just getting started.

CLAIRE
Louisville, Kentucky. Home, business or family?

DREW
(polite, final)
My dad.

Claire responds to his signal in her unique way – by ignoring it. She leans closer. She is an intent listener, nodding slightly, collecting information like a detective assembling clues to a murder.

CLAIRE
Where does he live in Louisville?

DREW
Actually he's *near* Louisville.

He pronounces it like the rest of the world: "Louie-ville." She corrects him, like a native.

CLAIRE
Loua - vull.

DREW
Lou-a-ville. He's in Elizabethtown.

CLAIRE
Good. I hope someone is driving you because the roads around there are *hopelessly* and *gloriously* confusing. *Lou-a-vull.*

DREW
I'll keep that in mind.

He smiles pleasantly, with absolute good manners, and claims his privacy by politely shutting the overhead light *off*.

IN DARKNESS

Claire doesn't even process the brush-off. She's built to help strangers.

CLAIRE
I'll draw you a quick map.

She hesitates and then clicks his light back *on*.

DISSOLVE TO

Claire draws a map on a piece of paper while telling Drew her life story. Drew, polite but distant, now clutches a drink.

CLAIRE
So Ben and I are in a wait-and-see pattern. He's my first real "genius," you know? His ideas are just *sinfully astounding*. *Disturbingly* astounding!

DREW
Right. Okay.

CLAIRE
He goes to Harvard, we meet up in strange cities and never the same one. He works a lot.

DREW
(dutifully)
So why is it "wait-and-see?"

CLAIRE
I'm not sure. I'll wait and see.
(off map)
So you want to get to 264. And then you want to *not miss* 60B. I'm going to be obnoxious about that.

DREW
Got it. Okay.

CLAIRE
Bens are *strangely delightful*. And very *intuitive*. Complex. Almost too complex *to be around*. Do you know any Bens?

DREW
(obligated)
I know one Ben. He's very professional.

CLAIRE
(very interested)
I'm a student of names. For example. What's your Dad's name?

DREW
Mitchell.

CLAIRE
Mitchell or Mitch?

DREW
Mitchell. Sometimes Mitch.

She nods approvingly, a connoisseur

CLAIRE
Mmm. *The son of a Mitch.*

DREW
And just yesterday... I was fired by a *Phil.*

CLAIRE
Phils are dangerous. Phils are less predictable than Bens.

He looks at her. And just randomly, for no reason she can even put her finger on... she falls in love a little.

CLAIRE
And your girlfriend is a...

DREW
Ellen.

The name "Ellen" is troubling to both of them.

CLAIRE
How's that going?

DREW
Sort of a wait-and-see. But then I waited... and I saw.

CLAIRE
I was going to say... I've never had a good experience with an Ellen, *or* a Phil.

She gives him the map.

DREW
How about with a Mitch?

CLAIRE
(immediately)
Never met a Mitch I didn't like. *Fun.* Full of life. You know what I mean when I say "fun?" You want to be part of a Mitch's *club*. Am I close?

DREW
(distant smile)
Close.

She detects a trace of *something.*

CLAIRE
He's okay, right?

DREW
Yeah. He's...

She nods sage-like, ever the student of names. Drew swallows once, contemplates saying "dead" for the first time in connection with his father.

DREW
... he's fine.

CLAIRE
(Southern charm)
Give him a big 'ol hug for me.

Drew doesn't respond. Not much.

CLAIRE
I'm Claire, by the way.

DREW
Drew.

CLAIRE
(appreciates name)

*Nice.*

DREW
(obligated)

Same to you.

CLAIRE
(self-deprecating)

*Please.* I'll let you sleep. Enjoy your map.

But something is still amiss in his demeanor. She shrugs it off, as she reaches for his garment bag. (The three other passengers are long asleep.)

CLAIRE

Let me take this –

He hesitates in handing it over, just a little. She responds in kind, treating the item a bit more gingerly. She looks at the suit, looks back at Drew who finally shuts the light off. She turns away with the suit. It hits her. She knows.

ON DREW

whose eyes glaze and blink slowly... just starting... starting... to... fall... asleep...

RANDOM IMAGES AND FEELINGS – ARCHIVING AND SORTING MEMORIES

... accompanied by no music, just the white noise of an airliner. We see criss-crossing images from the consciousness of a man attempting sleep. His voice-over continues in a vacant tone not unlike someone who has answered the phone while still dreaming. They *sound* awake but something is just a bit off.

1) A kid (**YOUNG DREW**) in the passenger seat of a Ford LTD 70's edition. Strapping on an unwieldy shoulder harness.

2) A man (**MITCH**) cleaning out an office, handing boxes to the kid.

3) A posed "casual" shot of Mitch. Always bolt-upright, hands at sides.

4) Mitch walks down a courtyard corridor, turning back for a moment, then waving goodbye with back turned.

5) Ellen's hand on the young recruit's back.

DREW'S VOICE
I won't really be able... to sleep. I am not... I probably... won't really... I am not asleep... did I bring enough money?... ATM... thirsty now...

CLAIRE'S VOICE
(interrupting)
Good morning!

Drew lurches awake. Claire holds orange juice just outside the range of his body, saving a spill.

CLAIRE'S VOICE
Go-od morning!

INT. PLANE/LOUISVILLE AIRPORT – BRIGHT MORNING

Drew exits past Claire, with blue suit in bag. She offers him a coupon and some wings. She is thoroughly professional and bright, even though her passenger load is four groggy people. Drew is the last to exit.

CLAIRE
And congratulations, Drew, you've earned your wings as our ten *millionth* passenger. *And* here is a coupon good for any Hyatt Regency in the greater Western Kentucky area. Better move quickly, *lots* of people behind you!

He looks behind him – no one there. He smiles gamely, the full scope of her humor eludes him.

DREW
(she's exhausting)
Well, thank you.

He takes the wings, and the coupon. He nods goodbye, puts it in his pocket.

CLAIRE
Absolutely.

She looks at him, wondering if this is her own last look at him.

DREW
And good luck with *Ben*.

CLAIRE
Look, I know I may never see you again, but –

She leans forward, and can't resist giving him – the him she secretly knows to be grieving – this private and heartfelt advice.

CLAIRE
– we are *intrepid*. We carry on.

DREW
(rather baffled)
Nice to meet you.

He turns, and exits quickly. She watches him for five-and-a-half steps. She can't help it:

CLAIRE
Rental cars are around the corner!

He turns. She continues loudly, pointing for emphasis at a distance.

CLAIRE
You'll see the signs! Bluegrass Parkway turns into Exit 60B! *Don't forget. 60B!*

DREW
(pointing back, imitating her)
Okay thanks!

Drew nods, turns away again. She just can't quite let him go.

CLAIRE
You okay to drive?!

DREW
(turns, spreads arms)
I'm fine!

ON CLAIRE

watching him leave her life, perfectly framed in the hallway. Her face is a question-mark. She raises her hands to her face and takes an imaginary "snapshot."

ON DREW

who can't help a half-grin as he waves politely and turns quickly. We see her, out-of-focus, still watching in the background. He looks down at the coupon in his hands. Turns it over.

ON FLIP SIDE OF COUPON:

CLAIRE COLBURN
709-342-7295 (cell) 709-432-2314 (home)
709-398-4562 (voice-mail)

And in black ink: DON'T MISS INTERSTATE 60B!!

For one very brief second, Drew is curiously intrigued. He laughs to himself, just a little. He tilts the coupon to the side to see that she's also written another number: 709-437-6823 ** auto club, if you get lost!

INT. DREW'S RENTAL CAR/UNDERGROUND PARKING LOT – DAY

Drew turns the air-conditioning on full-blast, everything its got. He's on the cell-phone. He's in the subterranean rental car parking area.

DREW
Uncle Dale! I'm in Louisville. Just landed. I'm leaving now... 60B... yes, I have a map and I will be there by five 'o clock. I have the Blue Suit.
(beat)
I know about 60B. Yes, I'm okay. I'll meet you right at Aunt Dora's house. Got it. Okay.

ON BLUE GRASS

whizzing by a car window. The deep green and the turquoise-blue of the passing landscape is so vivid it is psychedelic. He is unaware of it. Map rises into shot.

INT. DREW'S RENTAL CAR – DAY

Drew drives, barely noticing the sights just outside his window. His grasp of direction is already slipping away. We hear only the whoosh of countryside whipping by, joined with the air-conditioner.

(Note: Composition will subtly shift, as it does naturally in this area of the country, where life in general seems to be 4/5ths sky.)

INT. DREW'S RENTAL CAR – DAY – HOUR LATER

Drew is increasingly panicked. Signs whiz by, bearing no resemblance to the directions. He is very lost, shuffling through papers as he drives and cranes for a look at signs. There are no other cars in sight.

ON SIGNS

passing. Interstate numbers like 274... 278B... 279A... fly by.

INT./EXT. DREW'S RENTAL CAR – AFTERNOON

The car is completely still, parked in the middle of the road. Heat and beauty and absolute stillness surround him. He flips out inside the car.

DREW
Did I miss 60B!! *DID I MISS 60B???!!!*

INT. DREW'S RENTAL CAR – LATER AFTERNOON – MOVING

Driving again, Drew cranes to look for any clue, as he continues on his cell-phone.

DREW
Uncle Dale! Just got phone service back! Yes. I went all the way to Frankfort, and now I'm on the Blue Grass Parkway. Passed the Old Kentucky Home Museum... not the Chaplin River yet... it's very beautiful here... okay, great... I'll meet you right at the place... the parlor... is it a "parlor?"... *a home*...

ON SIGN

reading: Elizabethtown.

INT. DREW'S RENTAL CAR – LATE AFTERNOON

At last. Drew powers forward. Music.

SHOTS OF ELIZABETHTOWN

A red-and-purple sky. The still blazing late afternoon sun presses against the windows of his rent-a-car. Drew squints – he forgot sunglasses – as he drives into the town. This main thoroughfare cuts through Elizabethtown, first lined with a row of small businesses, then more residential

homes. Lawn equipment... porches.... flags dot nearly each house. One car-port even sports *four flags*. Drew drives past the Train Museum, actually a well-kept locomotive in a gravel field. Kids on the street wave him in, point him ahead. One kid on a blue bike, wearing goggles, joins him as an escort. A silver-haired woman on a porch watches his car pass. Other kids wave at him. On another front lawn, a teenage girl jumps on a trampoline. We pass Clay County High School, where girls basketball practices outside. More residents line the sidewalks, waving him forward. All now cheering and pointing him onward a few more blocks to his destination. He is, quite clearly, and quite famously... late. Music continues.

EXT. ELIZABETHTOWN FUNERAL HOME – LATE AFTERNOON

Drew pulls into the crunchy gravel parking lot by a brown-brick one-story building. The parking lot is full.

INT. RENTAL CAR – LATE AFTERNOON

Through his side window, Drew sees a youngish man slightly older than himself. He's leaning on the front fender of a hatchback. He looks enormously happy to see Drew. He is **JESSIE BAYLOR**, 31. Drew squints into the sun. Takes a breath. He opens the door and emerges from this, the last in a series of protective air-conditioned capsules that have deposited him here.

EXT. ELIZABETHTOWN FUNERAL HOME – LATE AFTERNOON

Drew officially sets foot in the South.

He is met with an otherworldly heat, a deep humidity, and the resounding roar of cicadas. All the smells and the lushness of the Southern summer immediately crowd his lungs. He has been to a few distant places, even Europe for a summer, but nothing has felt so far from home as this. Somewhere a bell clangs. The blinding sun cuts through some trees to blur his vision for a moment. Shading his eyes, he sees Jessie approaching swiftly, crunching loudly on the gravel. Hoisting up the garment bag, Drew meets him halfway. A light urgency is in the air.

DREW

Jessie?

JESSIE

Cuz!

Drew is hit with a walloping hug.

JESSIE

This loss will be met by a hurricane of love,
and you are staying with me!

Jessie walks Drew through a tree-shaded path to the Funeral Home's adjacent cemetery. Jessie is immediately tactile, and preps Drew like a Senator's aide whispering loudly in his ear.

JESSIE
Okay, Cuz, *I'm going to take care of everything.* You remember Uncle Dale. You're going to meet Charles Dean, who was a good old friend of your Daddy's. P.S. – you met all these people when you were very small. Don't worry, I will not leave your side.

They trudge up a small hill to a plot of land. Jessie presents Drew with pride and relief to have somebody new in town who is roughly his age.

JESSIE
... Charles Dean! Meet the grown up *Drew Baylor!*

Here is **CHARLES DEAN**, 62, a local institution. His face resembles a natural rock formation.

DREW
Thank you. My condolences.

JESSIE
And you remember Uncle *Dale*.

**(UNCLE) DALE BAYLOR**, 56, is Mitch's younger brother and Jessie's father. He too is regional through-and-though, though flecked with regret at his own lack of wanderlust. The men all gravely shake hands. Drew remembers *none of them.*

EXT. ELIZABETHTOWN CEMETERY PLOT – LATE AFTERNOON

The men stand near a patch of green lawn.

CHARLES DEAN
Here is Mitch's plot. It's been in your family for 272 years. I have always endeavored to keep this area clear for your Daddy.

DREW
(beat)
We are still discussing that issue. There is a possibility of cremation.

The mention of cremation lands hard. Charles Dean visibly freezes, looks are exchanged. A gust of wind blows.

CHARLES DEAN
Well, for now, the question is... do you want an open or a closed casket?

Drew shifts body language. The big questions are arriving quickly.

DREW
Closed.

CHARLES DEAN
You're *sure*.

DREW
Yes. He was a private man.

Charles Dean and Dale share a brief look. Drew feels there's something he's missing.

CHARLES DEAN
(tightly)
Okay, so closed.

DREW
Yes.

Charles Dean presents a small open box with a few of Mitch's valuables.

CHARLES DEAN
His wallet –

Drew looks at the lonely, familiar Brown Wallet.

DREW
The Brown Wallet.

CHARLES DEAN
And his ring from West Point. I'm assuming you'll want it on.

DREW
Yes. He was very proud of West Point.

also in box. Still ticking. Correct time: 6:10 pm.

CHARLES DEAN
I don't know if that means as much in California, but West Point sure matters here.

DREW
It matters a lot.
(beat)
Even though we now live in *Oregon*.

CHARLES DEAN
And I did already dress him in a wonderful brown suit.

DREW
(holding garment bag)
I did bring the *Blue* Suit.

CHARLES DEAN
You take a look at the brown and decide later.

An uncomfortable beat passes.

DREW
We'd prefer the Blue.

CHARLES DEAN
Fine. Then it'll be the Blue. Or the Brown.

DREW
Blue.

Charles Dean nods reluctantly.

CHARLES DEAN
And do you want a closed casket... or an *open* casket?

Drew looks slightly puzzled. *Wasn't this just settled?*

DREW
(carefully)
Closed?

A long beat of silence. Looks are exchanged.

DALE
(delicately)
Drew, I think what Charles Dean wants to say is, your daddy's friends might be disappointed if they can't see him again. They'd probably be disappointed if it was closed for the Viewing.
(aside, to Charles Dean)
Is Bill Banyon coming?

CHARLES DEAN
I don't think so... we haven't...

Dale nods, relieved. The issue evaporates.

DREW
The Viewing?

JESSIE
They're all here, Cuz.

CHARLES DEAN
They've been waiting since three 'o clock.

UNCLE DALE
There's a dinner later tonight. After the Viewing.

DREW
Fine. That's – that's fine. Just... we'd better go over schedule and so forth because I have to head back in two days. So we'll need to talk about flight arrangements for the casket –
(pause)
– or the ashes.

Looks are exchanged. It's very uncomfortable.

INT. NEARBY CHAPEL ROOM – LATE AFTERNOON

A door swings open to a back chapel *filled* with people. Charles Dean presents Drew grandly, as Drew looks at the small sea of unfamiliar faces, all of them dressed smartly and respectfully. He feels their eyes, sizing him up.

CHARLES DEAN
Everybody, this is Mitch's Boy from California, of the California Baylors. This is Drew. He's going to spend some time alone with his daddy, and then we'll all join him. Drew, you're related to just about everybody here, and just as your father was, we're all very excited about your eight-year triumph with that beautiful shoe.

Drew looks at their sincere and curious faces and sees pieces of recognizable noses and eyes, elements of his father's looks... all different spins on the same gene pool. He is not a public speaker. *Do they expect him to speak*? Jessie leans over and whispers in Drew's ear.

JESSIE
You're going to need to say a little something from your heart.

All eyes are now on Drew. Stiffly:

DREW
Thank you for being here. Sorry I'm late.

He looks at their faces. It's not enough. Awkward adrenalin courses through him.

DREW
My condolences to all.
(blurts)
I'm a little nervous. I've never seen a dead body before.

INT. VIEWING ROOM – EARLY EVENING

Drew is traumatized. Drew walks forward, advancing on the coffin containing his father. Jessie Baylor is at his side.

JESSIE
No, no – I'm not gonna let you feel bad. It was from the *heart* –
(beat)
– but let *them* say "condolences" to *you*.

DREW
I thought "condolences" was –

JESSIE
– no, it's incoming. It's an *incoming* phrase.

Only the upper-half of the coffin is open. An American flag is folded on the bottom-half of the casket. Charles Dean appears at Drew's other side.

The sight is rather overwhelming to Drew. A human body. His father... without breath. Behind him, Charles Dean assumes The Pose. Head down, hands clasped, pastoral. He is, after all, an expert mourner. Drew turns to him, as if up until this moment, it all could have been a terrible mistake.

DREW
(quietly)
There he is.

It's an enormously intimate moment. He draws closer, to the side of the casket. He passes through many emotions, ending on a slightly perplexed look. Charles Dean notices an oddness in Drew's reaction.

CHARLES DEAN
Did I not capture your Daddy... ?

Drew is silent. He continues looking, now curious.

DREW
I don't know what the word is. It's just a look I never saw before. A look on his face.

CHARLES DEAN
Too solemn?

DREW
No. I was going to say...

He turns to look at Charles, gauging the older man's feelings.

DREW
... maybe not solemn *enough*.

CHARLES DEAN
(quietly, defensively)
He was a fun guy.

DREW
Okay, but – this is – this is – what's the word?

CHARLES
Whatever you wish. If you saw him differently...

DREW
No. I just – I'm a little tired –

Drew nods – maybe so – and turns back to his father.

CHARLES DEAN
If you move around a bit, you'll see different aspects.

Drew knows he's hurt the man's feelings.

DREW
It's good... I just wish I could think of the word. I like it. I *like* the way he looks. You did a great job. Thank you.

Drew looks briefly at Charles Dean – this is all a bit *personal* – as Charles slips a box of Kleenex on the side of the casket. Drew nods politely. Charles nods solemnly, and pulls a reluctant Jessie with him.

ON DREW

looking down at his father. The improbable word comes to him.

DREW
*Whimsical*. The word is *whimsical*.

ON MITCH

who looks like he's been interrupted in mid-joke. We hear music, the introduction to the song that will play through this and the next sequence. Drew moves around the coffin, looking closely. In small ways, assisted by the lighting in this room, the expression actually does change... in small but seemingly infinite variations.

DREW
Hey – why not? *Whimsical*.

Drew stares. He reaches forward carefully, and touches the knuckles on his father's fingers. They are hard and cold. He keeps looking at that face, the odd upbeat expression, as he stands alone in the large room with Mitch. Drew tilts his head and moves to various vantage points to stare more carefully at his father, as music continues.

INT. AUNT DORA'S KITCHEN/HOME – EVENING

A *burst* of human interaction. The small house is packed with flowers, friends, relatives and food. A high-pitched intensity swirls around Drew. And he just happens to be in the beating heart of this home – the kitchen. With Jessie Baylor at his side, Drew is given a plate with a large piece of yellow pie (Chess Pie, a regional favorite) by 65 year-old silver-blonde **(AUNT) DORA CONNELLY**. Dora represents the cheerful side of the family, a grandchild-loving, powerful stalk of a woman. **LENA**, her older sister, moves nearby, always the co-hostess. (Lena: "How's your mother, how's Hollie?") Drew watches the unspoken synchronicity of these cooks, moving swiftly, holding plates of food, never bumping into each other as they expertly cook for many. They have swung into action. Three people talk to Drew simultaneously, one a tearful shy girlfriend **(CONNIE)** of his father's from a long time ago. She slips a high-school picture of Mitch into his hands. All around him, he sees bits and pieces of facial similarities. Music continues, as we see a portrait of Southern culture, the likes of which is entirely foreign to Drew.

SERIES OF SHOTS

(Note: Drew is rarely, if ever, alone in frame.)

1) Guests talk with Drew as he moves from the packed kitchen. Our view is *partially obscured by the backs of others*. He's given an Ale-8, a soft-drink in a deep-green glass bottle. Many hold similar bottles. "It's a regional drink, it's like Mountain Dew with a kick," says Jessie. They love seeing him drink it. "No it's good," Drew says. The guests, eager to talk to the visiting star, are too close to his face. Behind him on the wall is a Praying Hands sculpture. Moving in the close environment, he knocks down the Praying Hands, and is given that too, along with more photos of his father. Someone's voice says, pointedly: "We always wanted to know you better."

2) All burners on the stove are operating at full-blast. Hush puppies... Corn fritters... Chicken... and nearby...

3) A table with Ham. A four-year old boy pops into the shot. He's got fiery mischief in his eyes. He is **SAMSON BAYLOR**, and he eyes the ham with intent. He too holds an Ale-8 and is already chewing something else. Drew meets another Cousin: "Uncle Mitch always wanted us to meet. Everybody says we look alike." There is only the vaguest similarity.

4) Aunt Dora is assured that Bill Banyon is not showing up. She appears mightily relieved. (The words "Bill Banyon" should become more and more prevalent, as in "Thank God Bill Banyon isn't coming.")

5) **UNCLE ROY**, 56 and skinny, is asleep in the living room with television on, dreaming an old man's dreams. Nearby Teenagers, beset with long faces and light acne, fumble with an impossible group of remote controls, none of which seem to help operate a new TIVO/VCR system.

6) Drew moves through the main part of the house, toward the living room, and he spots Samson

by the ham. Jesse introduces Drew to a pretty 16 year-old girl, whispering "Mona is a stare-er." We meet **MONA**, who has a very compelling *stare*. Just as Samson feels he's not being watched, he slips the ham off the table and lets two nearby dogs erupt into a dogfight over it. Samson escapes unseen, as the dogs are blamed. Aunt Lena says: "Jennifer, get the dogs out of here!" Uncle Roy sleeps through it all.

7) The ham is quickly rescued, washed and re-dressed.

8) Dora pulls out a Ginzu knife and starts cutting the ham, as Drew stands nearby. The blade is familiar to Drew, and he looks at it like a lover with whom he still has a planned rendevous. Jessie whispers in Drew's ear throughout, always informing him of the players and the playing field.

9) Jessie attempts to confiscate an Ale-8 from Samson's hands. Samson wriggles away.

10) Camera catches some of the memorabilia and photos being handed to Drew.

11) Sad guy just sitting there, holding a cigarette, looking sad.

12) Samson unravels scotch tape, sees bananas, looks subversive.

13) Teenagers by the television, continue to struggle. Others are now enlisted to try and fix the TIVO/VCR.

14) Drew easily fixes the complicated remote control system, and he meets a local star Basketball Player girl (still wearing jersey).

15) Samson wedges the banana in the spigot of the pantry water-dispenser.

16) Twin teenage girls show off a dance routine, which cheers up some of the more obviously grieving elders.

17) Samson screams next to Uncle Roy, and wakes him up, as he runs out the front door. Uncle Roy asks absently: "Is Bill Banyon here?" A chorus comforts him, "No, probably not." Uncle Roy goes back to sleep.

18) Drew is still surrounded by friends and family, all offering condolences. Uncle Dale arrives to say, "easy now, he's been through a lot, and just 'cause his daddy liked to talk doesn't mean he does." Behind Dale, a car backs down the driveway. "Dale, isn't that your car? Who's in that car?" "Where are my keys?"

19) Jessie comes out of the bathroom. "What's going on?" Aunt Dora feeds him beans from a spoon. Like a child. "It's your son. He flooded the closet with the water dispenser. And right now, he's driving Dale's car."

20) Drew chases after the car, going backwards, slowly down the street, hangs on the side.

21) Samson is surrounded by concerned adults, who try not to reward his flamboyantly bad behavior.

INT. AUNT DORA'S HOUSE – NIGHT – LATER

There is an immediate ripple. Someone has seen him turning up the walkway. A moment later, **BILL BANYON**, 54, walks in the front door. Everything about him screams – mid-level slickster. He's untrustworthy, not as brilliant as he believes he is, and clearly arrogant. But here's the catch. He's fun. Rumor and innuendo *becomes him.* He simply has no shame, as he announces:

BILL BANYON
So you obviously made a group decision not to call and invite me.

Beat. No one responds. Banyon explodes into a smile, extending a hand to the first stranger he sees, moving through the crowd like a politician with a checkered background.

BILL BANYON
Hi. Bill Banyon...
(moving through crowd)
I hear Drew Baylor is here... how you doing?
... how you doing, Bill Banyon...

Banyon spots a woozy Samson. He kneels down to him.

BILL BANYON
Is this Samson? How you doing, Samson?
Give me a Big Boy's hug –

Jessie and Drew watch as Samson rewards Banyon with the entire contents of an upset stomach. The splatter hits Banyon and, to a much lesser degree, carpet and linen.

BILL BANYON
Okay! Okay then... *okay*... nice to see you too.

His face locked into detached bemusement, Drew absorbs the emotional cacophony of human behavior swirling around him.

EXT. AUNT DORA'S HOME – NIGHT

The windows and doors of the house are wide open, as the living room is aired out. Out of necessity, the dinner has moved outdoors. The house looks beautiful, lit from within.

Drew draws a sketch for a Starstruck Kid (Connie's son). The kid then asks him to autograph a Spasmotica ad, and pose for a picture. Others ask Drew questions, the Dancing Twins watch transfixed. Drew is the star of this evening, to the very end. We catch a real weariness in him.

ON JESSIE NEARBY

being dressed down by Dale. Dale speaks to Jessie as if he's still 17, which in many ways he is. It's embarrassing watching an adult scolded, but it's nothing new for Jessie.

DALE
You've got to take control of your kid! That boy is looking for *rules from you!*

JESSIE
Hey – blame me, everybody does.

DALE
You can't be a kid, and raise a kid! 'Cause they're smart. *They smell it.*

ON BANYON

talking to others about his business – real-estate – while adjusting borrowed sweatpants.

ON JESSIE

who walks over to Drew. It's been an eventful evening. Jessie has shared his world with Drew, and he is grateful to have somebody within the vicinity of his own age who just may understand.

JESSIE
How you holding up?

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD – NIGHT

Drew and Jessie jog through the center of the street, an unlikely looking pair weighed down with stuff. Drew tightly holds his bag, a few artifacts, food-containers and the Praying Hands. Jessie holds his son, asleep and slung over his shoulder. On either side, there is the blue glow of houses lit up by living room television. It feels good to be moving again, away from the crowd. They arrive at Jessie's small house. Samson is still asleep over Jessie's shoulder. A few fireflies snap and buzz.

DREW
Beautiful night... does it ever cool off?

JESSIE
No. This time of year – it's hotter than the hinges of hell. We got stars, though.

INT. JESSIE'S HOME/SAMSON'S ROOM – NIGHT

Drew watches from the darkened doorway, as Jessie slaps pajamas on a groggy Samson.

DREW
He's an exciting kid.

JESSIE
It's the only thing he inherited from Cheryl. The volume.
(to Samson)
Do you love me? Come on, I carried you half a mile... do you love me?

SAMSON
(sleepily)
No.

JESSIE
Thick and thin?

SAMSON
Thick and thin.

JESSIE
I'm surprised Aunt Hollie didn't make it.

DREW
She's pretty broken up. She sends her love to everybody, though.

Jessie nods, he knows the subtext.

JESSIE
I don't blame her. Around here, their favorite thing in the world is to get offended by something small, and hold onto it for *fifty years*.

Drew smiles at his outspoken cousin, and nods as in – *better get to bed*.

JESSIE
But then, you and your dad were close.

As Drew watches Jessie slaps pajamas on the sleepy kid:

DREW
Oh very close. I knew him very, very well. He was my Dad! We were actually going to... drive here together... this year... and it became next year... and no, I knew him very well. Very, very well.

And it's obvious in the extra beat we stay on Drew that he didn't know his father well *at all*.

INT. MUSIC/GUEST ROOM – NIGHT

Jessie shows Drew the guest room, which also functions as an "office." Shelves of toys and knick-knacks share space with band equipment, broken boom boxes, concert tickets, a concert poster on the wall. And a lonely-looking futon.

DREW
(tired)
This will be perfect. I love it. I can sleep anywhere.

JESSIE
You in my house, man. This is great. The circumstances are *not* great. But we are cousins, brother. Brother, we are cousins. That was my band.

Jessie points out the poster, as he pulls out pillows and clears kid toys from the floor. (Jessie is clearly a big kid with toys, trying to raise a smaller kid with toys.)

ON POSTER

it reads: Winchester Summerfest, featuring Lynyrd Skynyrd.

JESSIE
This is the show we opened for Lynyrd Skynyrd. Two of the original members!

DREW
Cool –

JESSIE
Well, we *almost* opened for 'em. It's really a long

story. We never played, and we never played since.

Drew sees the long list of performing bands listed on the poster, squints and finds the tiny letters at the bottom of the bill... Ruckus. We start to hear a sleepy whine in the next room. Samson stirs.

DREW

Ruckus?

JESSIE

Ruckus.

Jessie nods proudly and quietly, as Drew looks over some memorabilia from the failed band.

DREW

And now you fix computers.

JESSIE

I've taken the year off for hard thought... tough thinking. Something big has happened...or is happen-*ning*, and I want to be the guy who puts his finger on it. Creatively.

He laughs to himself. Drew laughs a little too, studies the poster. Behind him, Jessie sings spontaneously, acappella, a verse from his own composition, "Same In Any Language." Drew listens uncomfortably, unsure how to respond or where to look as Jessie sings:

JESSIE

"Those postcards I sent from Birmingham
All the way from the windows of Amsterdam.
Copped a gram from Dapper Sam
Just a four-letter man in another jam...
Oh yeah... "

Next door, Samson fully wakes and erupts into a sustained howl. Jessie discounts the noise like the seasoned father of a loud child. Drew takes a breath, politely nods, and looks around the room, imagining the next seven hours or so. The child is loud. We hear a quiet knocking along the wall.

WOMAN'S VOICE

Hello?

A young woman peeks around the corner holding keys. She has long straight hair with just a sliver of her face visible. She wears a Bartell's drug store uniform, with a dark coat over it. She is **DEBBIE**, 30ish.

JESSIE
(whispers)
Debbie!

DEBBIE
(shy, whispering)
Hey J.

DREW
Hi.

Jessie nods and winks at Drew as in – *you're on your own, my date is here.*

INT. MUSIC/GUEST ROOM – LATER NIGHT

Window pane shadows slash the darkened room. A fluttering almost-human form moves across the room. (It's the front porch flag's shadow.) Drew hears a low scratching noise. It's an old leafless tree that scrapes across the window in the wind. The branch scrapes again. Drew imagines:

HOLLIE'S VOICE
"His spirit is still hovering... looking for a place to land... "

Another other-worldly sound now catches his attention. It's just next door. Now the leafless tree branch scrapes again. The other-worldly whine grows louder, from behind the wall. We begin to realize that it's actually Debbie. And now we hear Jessie's sounds of pleasure. The wind kicks up, and the tree branch scrapes insistently. Drew now hears a mournful banshee wail. It's Samson, howling from the next room. Getting louder. For a few long moments, all are in syncopation. Drew rises on an elbow.

FRONT DESK VOICE
Welcome to the Hyatt Lexington...

INT. HYATT LEXINGTON – NIGHT

Drew with bag, backpack with Praying Hands peeking out, and food containers at the front desk. A wedding party has taken over much of the hotel. Balloons and banners read: Chuck and Cindy Hasboro!! Lovin' Life!! Lovin' Each Other 24-7!! Chuck and Cindy are featured in sunglasses, posed together. Clearly it's their favorite photo – it's *everywhere*. Drew is so tired it all looks pleasingly surreal. Before him is a super-professional young Southern **DESK GIRL (CHARLOTTE)**, 20. And she is memorable for this trait. She types at her computer, sending information to a database that only she sees. She types dutifully and steadily from the first moment we meet her. And she never stops.

CHARLOTTE
... how long will you be with us?

DREW
Two nights.

Her typing speeds up a beat.

CHARLOTTE
Are you with the Hasboro Wedding? Chuck and Cindy?

She's typing, and he hasn't even answered yet.

DREW
No. I'm leaving on Friday.

She nods with a private look of relief. Her typing modulates slightly.

CHARLOTTE
Are you a member of any major Travel program?

DREW
(realizes)
I have a coupon.

It's still in his pocket. Drew shows her the coupon. Charlotte's typing becomes suddenly slow and suspicious, as she looks at it.

CHARLOTTE
I haven't seen that coupon before.

DREW
Just give me the best room you have. Put it on my credit card.

CHARLOTTE
That'll be 325 a night – wedding rate.

DREW
Put it on my company card. Let it rip.

She types happily, at full speed.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY – NIGHT

Drew moves down the hotel hallway, key card in hand; weighed down with the cargo of food containers and mementos. The doors to many of the rooms are flung open. Televisions are on. The entire hotel seems to be filled with wedding guests. There's a 20ish couple at the end of the hallway. They part, as friends take them each in different directions. She is bride-to-be **CINDY**, an athletic blonde with shiny long hair pulled tightly back, looking over her shoulder at groom-to-be, **CHUCK HASBORO**. Chuck's a sinewy, short-haired extreme sports addict. Chuck's had some drinks. He calls out to others:

CHUCK
Don't change the schedule or Cindy'll freak out!

He turns to see Drew, standing at the door to the next room.

CHUCK
(simple realization)
I am the luckiest guy in the world.

It's the plain beauty of a time-worn phrase, said with real feeling. Chuck shuts the door, leaving Drew oddly happy for this stranger. Suddenly and powerfully, *he's never felt lonelier.*

INT. DREW'S HOTEL ROOM – NIGHT

Drew is on his cell-phone, sitting on the sofa in t-shirt and shorts and socks. His legs are kicked up on the coffee table. Complimentary toothbrush-and-mouthwash packages stand like pillars on the table before him. (We still hear party noise in the hallway.) Drew is seized by a sudden need for human contact. He's making calls on his cell-phone. He looks jagged and exhausted.

DREW
Heather. Pick up, sis. I'm exhausted. I'm at the Hexington... the *Lexington* Hyatt. Call me on the cell. ... Okay, I saw Jessie and Uncle Dale and... I have seen Dad. He's fine... well, he's not *fine*, it's, uhm... we're going to need a decision soon about the whole, you know the burial thing... call me on the cell, I'm about to go to bed.

INT. DREW'S HOTEL ROOM – NIGHT – MINUTES LATER

Drew on the phone.

DREW
Hey Mom. Are you there? I'm here at the Lexington Hyatt. Are you with Heather? Hello?

INT. DREW'S HOTEL ROOM – NIGHT – THIRTY SECONDS LATER

Drew on the phone.

DREW
*Ellen*! Hey it's Drew. Are you there?

INT. DREW'S HOTEL ROOM – NIGHT

Drew stares at the phone, and gestures to it like a dinner-theater magician.

DREW
Call me back... *somebody call me back.*

Silence.

ON TELEVISION

Drew absently switches channels. Four straight channels feature four straight gunplay murders. He settles on a music channel, a rock band's innocuous video of their upbeat song... but suddenly the singer has a gun and his "story" soon features him pointing the weapon directly at the camera. Drew shuts off the television.

INT. DREW'S HOTEL ROOM – NIGHT – ONE MINUTE LATER

Drew on the phone. It's messy, and he longs to hang up two seconds into leaving this message.

DREW
Claire Colburn. Yeah, it's Drew Baylor... and I wanted to... thank you for the directions. You're not around. *You don't have to call me back.* I'm going to sleep right now. *Long day.* Thank you for the coupon. It didn't really work.
(almost hangs up)
But don't feel bad. Everything's fine. Goodnight. It's all good. What am I saying? I don't even *say* "it's all good." Uh... goodnight.

Drew hangs up. Silence lasts one second. The phone rings.

DREW
Hello?

INT. HEATHER'S APARTMENT – NIGHT

Heather's on the phone. A flurry of cooking activity in the background.

HEATHER
Drew, you've got to come home. Mom has decided she wants to learn to cook...

DREW
Oh no. I'll be home soon.

HEATHER
Have you cried yet?

DREW
(lying)
A little.

HEATHER
Same here. When it happens, it's going to be for days. She's out of control, Drew. You've got to come home.

There is a call-waiting chime on the phone.

DREW
Wait a second. I'll be right back.

HEATHER
Please come home.

DREW
Just... hold on.

He clicks the next-call button.

DREW
Hello...

INT. MEMPHIS AIRPORT HALLWAY – LATE NIGHT

Claire is absolutely delighted, as she talks while striding through a late-night Memphis Airport. As is her style, she begins in mid-conversation.

CLAIRE

-- so here's what's unique and *somewhat iconic* about the Memphis Airport... by the way, great to hear from you... I didn't expect for you to call... then again, I did leave a few *thousand* numbers.

(beat)

It's Claire.

DREW

Claire, can I call you right back?

CLAIRE

I'll hold.

DREW

Okay.

He clicks the next-call line.

DREW

Hello?

INT. HEATHER'S APARTMENT – NIGHT

Heather on the phone.

HEATHER

Lasagna. She's making broccoli lasagna.

DREW

*Lasagna*? Oh God. No. You don't have to *eat it*, do you?

HEATHER

Please come home.

ON HOLLIE

cooking.

HOLLIE

I want to learn to cook, and I want to learn to *laugh*, and I want to tap dance. I've always wanted to tap dance.

HEATHER
(sotto, into phone)
She says she wants to learn to cook, she wants to learn to laugh, and she's always wanted to tap dance.
(starting to cry)
She won't stop moving. She's in constant motion.

DREW
Don't cry, she'll be okay.

HEATHER
I'm crying for *myself*. I have her for two more days. I haven't been alone for a second to just –

DREW
Heather...we need a decision here. What's your opinion on the whole burial issue? Because there's a lot of people here with *big opinions* -- and there's a problem with the Blue Suit that *I can't put my finger on!*

The line chimes. Another call is coming in.

DREW
Wait wait wait. Hold on a second. Let me get off these other calls.

He clicks the next-call button.

DREW
Hello?

INT. ELLEN'S APARTMENT – NIGHT

It's Ellen on the phone. She's stiff, a little nervous. She's dressed up, on her way out.

ELLEN
Drew, it's Ellen. You called me.

DREW
(electrified, loopy)
Ellen! Thank you for calling me back! *So much is going on.* I called you about that silly goodbye.
(beat)

Could you hold on for just a second? I'm so happy you called. I'm just –

ELLEN
Yeah, but I'm going out to dinner.

DREW
Just *one* second. I really need to talk with you. Don't go.

He clicks the next-call line.

DREW
Hello?

INT. AIRPORT SHUTTLE – NIGHT

Claire on the phone, patiently picking up right where she left off, full-steam ahead.

CLAIRE
... so *here's* what's great about the Memphis airport...

DREW
Claire, hold on.
(beat)
Listen, on second thought, I just wanted to thank you and everything. Really, just wanted to call you and thank you. Goodbye, thank you and... you know, take care.

CLAIRE
(immediately)
I'll hold.

DREW
(immediately)
Okay.

He clicks the next-call line.

DREW
(breath)
Hello!

INT. HEATHER'S APARTMENT – NIGHT

Heather on the phone.

HEATHER
Cremated. Don't you agree?

DREW
Heather, they really love him here. They're not buying cremation. They don't even acknowledge the word. They have a family burial plot that goes back *hundreds of years*. It's almost like some mystic joke, me being here trying to... whatever, listen – we have to talk about this. But I need to *call you back*.

HEATHER
(aghast)
Is there anything more important than the conversation we're having?

DREW
I will call you *right back*.

HEATHER
Okay. Just dial *hell* and I'll answer!

DREW
I'll call you right back.

HEATHER
Just tell me it's going to be fine. You don't even have to mean it.

DREW
It's going to be fine. I will call you right back.

HEATHER
I miss dad.

DREW
Was he a fun guy?

HEATHER
Of course he was a fun guy! Especially in the last few years when you got so busy --

DREW
I'll call you right back.

He clicks the next-call line.

DREW
Hello?

INT. ELLEN'S APARTMENT – NIGHT

Ellen is standing up, ready to go, but now slightly irritated. She's opening up some gum.

ELLEN
How was it a silly goodbye?

DREW
Ellen. Look, I know you're late for dinner --

ELLEN
I *am* late.

DREW
I'm in Kentucky –

She shakes off her impatience with him, sets down her bag.

ELLEN
(just says it, with love)
It was real and it was great... and it was *really great*.

Drew says nothing.

ELLEN
(then briskly)
Call me anytime. Okay.... goodbye.

DREW
Goodbye?

ELLEN
Goodbye. Just goodbye. It's not *good bye*.
It's, you know... "good bye." Take care.

DREW
Okay, goodbye.

ELLEN
(simple, final)
Goodbye.

As he suspected, it is indeed the sound of a true and final goodbye. The power of it startles him.

DREW
*Goodbye*?

She hangs up, and Drew looks at the cell-phone in his hand for a long beat. He clicks the next-call button. Resigned, with polite obligation:

DREW
Hello?

INT. CLAIRE'S CAR – DRIVING – NIGHT

Claire on the phone.

CLAIRE
So did I win the phone lottery?

DREW
(breath)
Tell me about the Memphis airport.

CLAIRE
I'm over it. I'm actually almost home now.
Were the roads as *hellish* as I told you?

He finally says the words for the first time. It's freeing, and the freedom surprises him.

DREW
Claire. My dad's dead.

CLAIRE
I know.

DREW

You knew.

CLAIRE

I don't know a lot about everything, but I do know a lot about the part of everything that I know, which is – people.

DREW

And I thought I was so mysterious...

CLAIRE

Trust me. Everybody is less mysterious than they think they are.

He sits back in his chair. Finally, a real conversation.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HYATT HOTEL – LATER NIGHT

The smallish high-rise gleams in the dark. A light in the window. We see Drew pacing at a distance. It feels good to unburden, even if it is to a stranger.

DREW'S VOICE

... and they all know me, and I don't know any of them, and I'd never seen a dead body before but they were waiting to see that body like it was a *rock concert* –

INT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT – LATER NIGHT

Claire's dressed in t-shirt and sweat pants, as she pops two White Castle burger squares into a microwave. She takes out the garbage as she talks, juggling the phone with one hand.

CLAIRE

... well, that's a crime... to have never taken a solitary road-trip across country... everybody's gotta take a road trip at least once in their life. Just you and some music? Seriously, you've never... I've done it four times...

INT. DREW'S HOTEL ROOM – NIGHT

Drew is changing shirts, juggling the phone with one hand as he speaks. Finds himself talking

DREW
... oh no, you have *no idea* of the sheer *volume* of my cousin's kid when he cries... he's three... his name is *Samson* and he is the loudest person I've ever met. He is the Loudest Kid in the World. Plus, he also drives. He took a 99 Buick out for a spin tonight...

INT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT – LATER NIGHT

A few minutes later, the mood has changed. Claire switches CDs from a collection she keeps in a travel bag.

CLAIRE
I think there is a greater spirit, definitely... but organized religion is just a narrow definition of a belief system...

INT. DREW'S HOTEL BATHROOM – LATER NIGHT

Drew pees quietly against the side of the bowl to hide the sound from Claire.

DREW
... well, there is comfort in ritual. And the ritual can be spiritual in itself. But I agree, what's left behind, finally, are the impressions you made on people.

INT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT – LATER NIGHT

She empties the freezer of obsolete food, and fills another garbage bag, as she empties kitty litter.

CLAIRE
No, see more important is to *know where to go*. You haven't traveled at all, have you?

INT. DREW'S HOTEL BATHROOM – LATER NIGHT

Drew flushes and high-tails it to the next room to hide the flushing sound.

DREW
I'm not peeing. You'd *know* if I was peeing.

EXT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT – LATER NIGHT

She's in the hallway, sitting, in a long shot, painting toe nails with her foot on the doorway.

CLAIRE
No, I don't have an accent. *You* have an accent.

INT. DREW'S LIVING ROOM – LATER NIGHT

Drew paces.

DREW
... I just recently decided that things *really are*... black and white. I can't believe I'm telling this to somebody... particularly a stranger. Which I know you aren't, but –

ON CLAIRE

on her back, kicking her legs to dry her toes. Then she stops.

CLAIRE
... yeah, she was an alcoholic, and so *we* all became "helpers," which I still can't help. I can't help helping...

ON DREW

close.

DREW
... he was a Captain in Vietnam and they met towards the end of the war... he was literally *on his way home*... they met in an elevator...

INT. CLAIRE BATHROOM – NIGHT

Claire in the bathroom.

CLAIRE
... and I can usually see all points of view and that's my problem. I can't give a yes or no answer that quickly.

I can actually see all sides of any problem. I can't ever answer yes or no. I spend so much time thinking about all the answers to the problem... that I forget what the problem actually was. I can actually agree with *every point of view*... so *yes*. But I also see the other side. So yes. But maybe no...

She flushes and moves quickly down the hall, to hide the sound.

CLAIRE
What were you doing when you heard about Mitch? You know what – you don't have to talk about it.

INT. DREW'S LIVING ROOM – LATER NIGHT

Drew in the hotel room in shorts. He plugs in the charger for the phone. This call is running a little longer than he anticipated.

DREW
... okay, the shoe business. If you're smart, you'll just wear shoes and never ask any questions. Just enjoy your shoes and don't think about where they came from. It's like hot dogs.

INT. CLAIRE'S BEDROOM/BATHROOM – LATER NIGHT

Claire puts on pajama bottoms, brushing her teeth and cradling the phone by her neck.

CLAIRE
And then Ben said... hold on...

She moves into the bathroom. She spits, covering the phone against her chin.

INT. DREW'S BATHROOM – LATER NIGHT

Drew finishes washing some socks.

DREW
Okay. Okay. I'll drive back home. At least part of the way. *I will take a road trip*. I was actually going to go with Mitch next year... why am I calling him "Mitch?"

INT. CLAIRE'S BEDROOM – NIGHT

Claire packs clothes in a super-efficient manner.

CLAIRE
... and you know what Ben says, "just be authentic."
That's the only decent advice in the world. But that's Ben.

INT. DREW'S BED -- NIGHT

He listens. It feels like truths are being told, late at night.

DREW
I'll let you go to sleep.

INT. CLAIRE'S BEDROOM – NIGHT

Claire yawns.

CLAIRE
Yeah... okay... fun talking to you.

INT. DREW'S HOTEL ROOM – NIGHT

Drew shuts off the light.

DREW
... at you... *with* you. Don't forget about what
I said about *sticking to a single point of view.*

INT. CLAIRE'S BEDROOM – NIGHT

She shuts off the light.

CLAIRE
Yeah you too.

INT. DREW'S HOTEL ROOM – NIGHT

In darkness.

DREW
Shit. I forgot to call my sister.

INT. CLAIRE'S BEDROOM – NIGHT

In darkness.

CLAIRE
(beat)
Do you have a mini-bar in your room? You want to have a beer over the phone?

Her light switches on.

INT. DREW'S HOTEL ROOM – NIGHT

His light switches on. Drew looks at the empty mini-bar, makes a disappointed sound.

DREW
Empty.... wait...

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY – NIGHT – MINUTES LATER

Drew enters frame and moves down the hotel hallway in shorts, t-shirt and hotel robe, still holding cell-phone. He is loopy, and beyond tired. He sees more laminated Chuck and Cindy posters, festooned with balloons.

DREW
Chuck... Cindy... Cindy... Chuck...

The hallway is mostly empty. We hear distant music. The Chuck and Cindy wedding party is raging elsewhere. Drew feels stupidly alive, with no one watching, as he grooves slightly and shuffles into the back bathroom of an empty party room in search of beer. He finds a bathtub filled with ice and many floating bottles.

DREW
(on phone)
Aha! Nectar from Olympus! Unguarded! Ha ha!
(mock secrecy)
I'm currently stealing Chuck and Cindy's wedding beer.

Drew pilfers a couple bottles, one for each pocket, and rises to see Chuck Hasboro himself, also in a robe. Chuck looks deeply drunk, deeply happy.

CHUCK
You're a friend of Chucks, right?

DREW

Yes –

CHUCK

No, you're not. I'm Chuck.

DREW

Chuck! Of "Chuck and Cindy?" It *is* you.

CHUCK
(warily)

Chuck Hasboro.

DREW
(into phone)

It's Chuck. I told you about Chuck. I'm talking *to Chuck*...

CHUCK

Who are you?

DREW

Drew Baylor. Your neighbor.

CHUCK

Are you here for my wedding?

DREW

No.

CHUCK

Business?

DREW
(breath, simple truth)

My dad died, and I'm here for his funeral.

Suddenly, Chuck stops. He is taken with the utter honesty of it all.

CHUCK

Oh man –

DREW

No. Please... it's alright... it's not *alright*, but –

CHUCK

No! It's *not alright*. I'm – I'm sorry. I can't – *that's hard* –

DREW

It is hard.

CHUCK

Aw, shit --

Chuck begins to cry.

CHUCK

– Death and life and death and *life*. Right next *door* to each other... once you start seeing the Big Fucking Picture, *you cannot go backwards*.

DREW

No, that's... that's good advice.

CHUCK

This is Big Fucking Picture.

(crying, on the beer)

Take it all. Drink drink. Enjoy brother.

DREW

Thanks, I'll take two...

Chuck gives him three, and grabs a few for his own pockets, plus more. Impulsively, he *hugs* Drew. Their robes clank loudly with beer – a human toast.

CHUCK

We're here for the next three days, if there's *anything* I can do for you.

(reaches for the phone)

Chuck Hasboro. If there's anything I can do for you guys. Okay?

Chuck hands the phone back to Drew, still emotional, and *hugs Drew again*. An even louder, more satisfying human toast. Chuck sighs heavily, as Drew heads down the hallway.

DREW

(into phone)

We're making friends like *crazy*. Where do we go now?

EXT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT – NIGHT

Claire on the phone on the porch, with a bottle of beer, her legs drawn up to her chest.

CLAIRE
"It was real and it was great and it was *really great*?" *I hate her!!*

EXT. DREW'S BALCONY – NIGHT

Drew on the balcony with a beer, attempting to stick up for Ellen.

DREW
I actually thought it was – you know...
(clinging to belief)
... sort of a *compliment* at the time.

He listens to her laughing.

DREW
I'll let you go to sleep.

INT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT – LATE NIGHT

Claire now doing late-night laundry in a tiny stacked washer-dryer.

CLAIRE
No – that's so funny it makes me cry.
(beat)
But no. I cry at the drop of a hat. As a matter of fact, I cry at the *hat*. I cry at the weather that creates the *need* for the hat. I'm a crier. I'll let you go.

INT. DREW'S HOTEL ROOM – NIGHT

Drew in his room, thoughtful.

DREW
Yeah, it's late. I gotta get up early too.

INT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT – LATE NIGHT

She draws her legs closer.

CLAIRE
(grows very direct)
But they say it *will* hit you. It could be ten minutes or it could be ten years from now. So it's good that you talk about it. Or *don't* talk about it. Well, we *have* talked about it. But that's what they say.

INT. DREW'S HOTEL ROOM – NIGHT

Drew laughs, as he lays out wallet and keys on a table near the door for the next day.

DREW
That's what *they* say, huh?

CLAIRE
Yes. That's what *they* say.

DREW
(beat)
I've always wondered this. Who are *"they?"*

INTERCUT:

INT. BATHTUB – NIGHT

Claire in the bathtub, protecting toenails.

CLAIRE
You know – Them.

DREW
"Them?"

CLAIRE
Yes, the inimitable collective "Them."

DREW
And who says we're supposed to listen to "Them?"

CLAIRE
(beat)
*They* do.

DREW
Doesn't your ear hurt?

CLAIRE
Yes, and I have to get up in two hours and be charming.' I'm going to Hawaii --

DREW
You'll get there and have fun.

CLAIRE
I'll get there and *sleep*. It's just a little vacation I traded routes for... I'll let you go.

EXT. DREW'S PORCH – LATE NIGHT

Drew on the porch. He hesitates.

DREW
Wait. Uhm. When will you be back?
(beat)
Hello?

INT. CLAIRE'S BEDROOM – NIGHT

Claire in bed. Only a small night-light is on.

CLAIRE
Yeah, I'm just wondering if this whole thing is better on the phone. You're so much better on the phone. Maybe we should never face each other again.

INT. DREW'S HOTEL ROOM – NIGHT

Drew in bed. Television flickering. Tired but truthful:

DREW
I enjoyed this.

He shuts the television off. Total darkness.

INT. CLAIRE'S BEDROOM – NIGHT

Total darkness.

CLAIRE

Hey. You're only forty-five minutes away. I'll meet you halfway if you want to see the sun rise. At this point, it's probably easier to stay up.

Drew turns the light back on.

DREW

You think so?

Claire turns the light back on.

CLAIRE

I think that's what "They" say.

INT. DREW'S RENTAL CAR – TRAVELING – LATE NIGHT

Drew on the phone in the car.

DREW

I see your headlights. I see your red hat.

INT. CLAIRE'S CAR – LATE NIGHT

Claire drives in a red wool hat.

CLAIRE

There you are.

INT. DREW'S RENTAL CAR – LATE NIGHT

Drew pulls over. He feels like he's part of a sudden early-morning fishing trip.

EXT. KENTUCKY HIGHWAY – EARLIEST MORNING

The first glints of daylight are in the sky, as they get out of their cars. Both look rumpled in long coats as they walk towards each other. They size each other up, anticipation in the air, still talking on cell-phones even though they are only six feet away from each other.

CLAIRE

Hello!

DREW

*Hey.*

CLAIRE

Okay –

DREW

Alright then. Should we hang up now?

CLAIRE

Okay. Goodbye.

DREW

Goodbye.

They both hang up. It's a little exciting.

CLAIRE

So hi.

DREW

Hey.

They stand together in the morning light. And then it hits them. As still virtual strangers, it's surprisingly uncomfortable knowing so much about each other.

CLAIRE

Follow me –

EXT. HILLSIDE – EARLIEST MORNING

He follows her, slipping a little, moving down the hillside.

EXT. HILLSIDE VISTA – EARLIEST MORNING

Drew and Claire sit together on a hillside rock, watching the sun come up. They look over an expanse of rolling Kentucky land, dotted with ramshackle cow pastures. There is the sound of distant early morning garbage trucks, bottles crashing on bottles. Cicadas start up for the new day. There's not much to say that they haven't said already. The threat of a kiss is in the air. Romantic pressure abounds. Birds are chirping a little too loudly.

DREW
(obligated)

Beautiful.

He glances around. It's a touch awkward.

CLAIRE
(blurts)
We peaked on the phone.

DREW
(immediately)
Yeah, I – I'm a little tired.

CLAIRE
Me too. Wow. Okay. Let me guide you back to the hotel so you don't get lost.

ON TAIL LIGHTS

Her car in front of his. Claire leads him back to the hotel. Theme music.

ON PASSING WINDOWS OF ELIZABETHTOWN

The same main street now empty, with a few lights still on. He turns and sees..

THE BLUE BICYCLE

parked outside a fence, goggles hanging from the handlebars.

ON INTERSECTION

They arrive at the intersection where the Hyatt is just ahead.

LAST IMAGE

It's a crystal, crisp morning. Now it's cold. Claire powers down the passenger car door window and leans way over to say goodbye to him. She slows down as she passes. It's the perfect image for a connoisseur of last looks.

CLAIRE
Aloha!

DREW
Aloha.

Drew shakes off the pleasant feeling, and returns to his life.

FADE OUT.

FADE UP ON:

EXT. MOM'S HOME – EARLY MORNING

Hollie stands in her driveway.

HOLLIE
You will not defeat me.

She is speaking to her car, a two-door Volvo.

ON MOTOR

gleaming and forbidding.

ON HOLLIE

peering inside, with manual. She knocks the metal stand propping up the hood, and it closes on her harshly and heavily.

WIDE SHOT – HOLLIE TRAPPED BY THE HOOD

Struggling, like a fish caught in the jaws of a shark. Heather appears and *screams*, as we hear Hollie's voice.

HOLLIE
I'm okay... I'm okay...

INT. ELIZABETHTOWN FUNERAL HOME – MORNING

Drew stands over the coffin with Charles Dean, looking disatisfied.

CHARLES DEAN
The Blue Suit clashed with the lining of the coffin.

DREW
I don't think he would complain.

CHARLES DEAN
I'd have to order another casket from Lexington.
Something that might work with the family of blue.
(beat)
Which is another $1700.

DREW
(less sure)
Okay.

CHARLES DEAN
We could have it ready for the Memorial.

DREW
I thought yesterday was the Memorial.

CHARLES DEAN
No – the Memorial is for everybody to get together and celebrate your father.

DREW
Didn't we do that yesterday?

CHARLES DEAN
(exasperated)
That was the Viewing. The Memorial is this Saturday. And *many people are coming*.

DREW
When is the *Funeral*?

CHARLES DEAN
A week from this Sunday.

DREW
(emphatic)
Mr. Dean. With all great and due and wonderful respect... *everything has to be finished by this Sunday*. I'll stay an extra day, but no longer.

CHARLES DEAN
Just tell me we can rule out... the other option.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD – DAY

Drew is on the phone, standing in the middle of the school football field. As he talks, Charles Dean and Uncle Dale and Bill Banyon stand at the door the gymnasium, waving to Drew to follow them. Drew raises a hand – I'll just be another minute.

DREW
Mom. Are you absolutely certain those were his wishes?

EXT. OREGON DANCE STUDIO – DAY

Hollie Baylor is a tight portrait of anxiety gone haywire. She now wears dance attire. Heather stands nearby, hugging herself to stay sane.

HOLLIE
Honey, I don't know when I'm going to crash, but as of right now –
(indicating beleaguered Heather)
– we're learning about the car, I'm learning organic cooking, I'm going to tap dance and later today, I'm going to *fix the toilet.* It is *five minutes at a time.*

Heather is at near exhaustion levels, trying to keep up. She shouts softly in the background.

HEATHER
Please come home, Drew!

DREW
Mom, I think you need to slow down.

HOLLIE
And do what -- *cry*? Everybody says to take anti-depressants. Hey. I'm out here making things happen. All forward motion counts.

HEATHER
(yearning)
*Please* take anti-depressants, mother. Or better yet – *give them to me*.

HOLLIE
When are you coming home?

DREW
There's a Memorial at his high school gymnasium this Sunday --

HOLLIE
(suddenly suspicious)
Who's there planning all of this?

DREW
Uncle Dale and Bill Banyon.

HOLLIE
*Bill Banyon* is there? *BILL BANYON?*

DREW
Yes...

HOLLIE
He's a... he's a... *con man*. Bill Banyon still owes your father twelve *thousand* dollars. The cheapest man in the world! Seventeen years ago he did something I will never tell you about but it almost ruined this family to it's very *core*. The price of admission is very steep on this guy! And he wears orange --

She's just getting started on this subject, but Drew must cut her off.

DREW
Mother, listen, *focus* -- !

HOLLIE
Bill BANYON?

DREW
Last time I'll ask --

HOLLIE
I know it's all very charming, with the pickled things in jars, and the Southern charm, and the hams that hang in the garage until they're so moldy you can grow penicillin on them but --

DREW
-- are you *sure* about the cremation? Because this decision, you know... it's gonna stick around for a while.

A silent moment passes.

HOLLIE
*If Bill Banyon is there – definitely cremation!*

DREW
Okay. I've gotta go.

HOLLIE
And you can tell Bill Banyon I'm coming.

INT. GYMNASIUM – AFTERNOON

Drew joins the others, holding Ale-8s in the gymnasium. The men are sizing up the possible location of the Memorial. Drew claps his hands, as in *here's the tough news, fellas*.

DREW
Gentlemen – it's cremation. And my mother's coming.

Bill Banyon nods resolutely. Storm clouds sweep across his face. Charles Dean clutches his heart. The men exchange looks.

CHARLES DEAN
I don't do cremations. You're going to have to go to Louisville.

DREW
(mispronouncing)
I'll go to Louie-ville.

INT. HYATT LOBBY – DAY

Drew is walking through the lobby, past Chuck and Cindy posters, tired and holding map and crematory documentation. To himself:

DREW
Louie-vull... Loua... ville...

His cell-phone rings. He answers as he walks.

DREW
Hello.

CLAIRE'S VOICE
Aloha! I talked to my friend Kendra, who had a girlfriend with a kid who is *exceedingly* loud like Samson.

Drew is a bit weary, and not up to her energy level.

DREW
Oh, hi, Aloha.

CLAIRE'S VOICE
– and she has given me a video-tape that works *absolute miracles*. We've got to get it to Samson!

DREW
(tired)
Hey thanks Claire.

CLAIRE'S VOICE
What – you're already tired of me?

DREW
I just haven't slept. I'm sorry... How's Hawaii?

CLAIRE'S VOICE
Well, I'm checking out this cute guy.

DREW
(annoyed, tired)
Why are you telling me that?

ON CLAIRE IN THE SAME LOBBY

walking twenty steps behind him, like a spy. She takes a pin and sticks it in one of Chuck and Cindy's wedding balloons, attached to the laminated poster of the couple. It pops loudly.

ON DREW

who turns and looks.

HIS POV

empty. But he has an odd feeling she's nearby.

DREW
Where are you?

Her hands slip over his eyes, she spins him around.

CLAIRE
How could I leave you in distress? I'm taking you out.

Music begins, the perfect song that might pop up somewhere on a great date and forever become a souvenir of the occasion, except we are in the incongruous setting of...

INT HADLEY CREMATORY (LOUISVILLE) – DAY

A row of Urns. All different sizes and shapes. Moving shots of Drew and Claire examining all the different possibilities. A **YOUNG WORKER** looks on appreciatively, not used to someone as colorful and lively as Claire in this world that is very much about the opposite. As music continues, she turns this potentially lugubrious task into an explosion of life. Each looking at opposite walls of choices, Drew and Claire back into each other unintentionally – it's their first physical contact. They separate. The Young Worker turns his attention to an older couple who enter. Behind his back, Claire playfully flings one of the urns across the room to Drew, laughing. When the grieving older couple turn to look at Claire, she's already serious and respectfully monochromatic. Drew and the Young Worker share a look. The Young worker's expression is this – *why you and not me?*

Now Claire explores a row of oil paintings of benefactors, imitating each of their expressions, even a famous Kentucky racehorse. Claire finds a small flag, and eventually she and Drew arrive from different directions in front of one very idiosyncratic Purple Urn. She grabs it, and poses Drew on a viewing bench with the Urn and the flag. She takes an imaginary snapshot. Drew hands the Urn to the Young Worker. The selection has been made. And somehow, surprisingly, Drew shares a look with her that could only be described as disbelief – he's actually just had fun.

YOUNG WORKER
Just need your signature there... and you can pick this up tomorrow after the procedure.

EXT. HADLEY CREMATORY (LOUISVILLE) – LATER DAY

Drew and Claire walk together outside, under the shady oaks that line this mock-colonial mansion that houses the "resting grounds." Music trails off.

DREW
Look – I'm – I'm not sure I feel comfortable having fun.

She looks at his serious face, and cracks up. He looks right and left. *What's so funny?*

INT. TRACEY'S RESTAURANT – DAY

They sit across from each other. He continues, stressing this point:

DREW
I am serious. I've got nothing but problems.

CLAIRE
Alright. Let's work through 'em. One by one.
I'm good at this.

DREW
I think there's only one problem, and it's *everything*.

CLAIRE
Come on – one by one --

DREW
For starters? My dad's dead! And we were
supposed to get to know each other better,
as adults... *next year*.

CLAIRE
You're dealing with it. It happens.

DREW
My mom wants cremation. They don't *do*
cremations in Elizabethtown.

CLAIRE
Not a problem.

Drew gets up to grab a missing utensil. She swivels and studies him, and his every word.

DREW
There's an expensive Memorial coming up.
(unconvincing)
Not that money is an issue *of course* –

CLAIRE
(waves it away)
It'll all work out.

He sits down.

DREW
And I can't make an attachment here because I'm just going to disappoint you in a very profound way. So I think today is pretty much the sum total of us.

They study each other's faces.

CLAIRE
You're right. It's everything.
(leans forward with mock panic)
It's a complete *disaster*. You have no choice but to give up *completely!*
(beat)
But we do have tonight.

He looks at her. She's immovably positive.

EXT. GREENBELT – NIGHT

They walk back to the parking lot. There is an errant sprinkler, and they must adapt.

DREW
You're kind of great, Claire. You do know that. Sort of amazing even.

CLAIRE
Come on. I don't need an ice-cream cone.

DREW
It's not an ice-cream cone.
(beat)
What's an ice-cream cone?

CLAIRE
You know, "here's a little something to make you happy..." Something sweet that melts in five minutes. I'm completely cool with anything you want to say or not say – I don't need it.

He smiles. He likes her language.

CLAIRE
Besides, Ben is coming in tomorrow night.

They reach her car. She rummages through her purse. The moonlight is beautiful. We hear the sounds of others across the lake. Anybody else would be kissing by now.

CLAIRE
You want to hear *my* theory?

DREW
'Course.

CLAIRE
You and I have a special talent, and I saw it immediately.

DREW
Tell me.

CLAIRE
We're the Substitute People.

DREW
(admires her language)
"Substitute People?"

CLAIRE
I've been the Substitute Person my whole life. I'm not an Ellen. I never wanted to be an Ellen. And I've never been a Cindy either... although *Chucks love me* –

DREW
I'm sure they do.

CLAIRE
I like being alone too much. I'm with a guy – who is "married" to his academic career – I rarely see him. And I'm the Substitute Person there. I like it that way. It's a lot less pressure.

DREW
I get it.

CLAIRE
(confiding, realizing)
My parents wanted a boy. I'm even the Substitute Person to *them!* Until the real thing shows up... I'm a very, *very good* Substitute Person.

Drew enjoys the oddness of her thought process. They exchange a look.

CLAIRE
But if we kiss. I mean *really kiss*... I know that just being the Substitute won't be enough anymore.

She hands him the video from her purse, suddenly she's a little emotional.

CLAIRE
Here, play this for the loudest kid in the world.

DREW
I'm not used to girls like you.

CLAIRE
(covering)
That's because I'm one of a kind.

DREW
You don't have to make a joke. I like you without the jokes.

CLAIRE
Get some sleep. I have a Personnel Interview tomorrow morning and if I get transferred, Ben will die.

They still don't move. Almost kissing. All around her, the mood and lighting and wind and.... *everything* is perfect.

DREW
Well... let's let him live.

It is that moment... and neither move any closer. They are poised at the edge of breaking the personal barrier, neither wanting to be the first to move forward... or away. They almost kiss. He looks at her lips. Theme begins in the form of an intoxicating piano part, everything willing them to give in to the romantic abandon.

CLAIRE
Doesn't it just feel better? That we didn't just --

DREW
Yeah.

CLAIRE
– do something impulsive. I mean, now we actually have a shot at being *friends* for the rest of our lives...

They chuckle with feigned appreciative relief.

BILL BANYON'S VOICE
The gymnasium just isn't going to be big enough...

INT. HYATT BALLROOM – NEXT DAY

Drew and Bill Banyon stand in the huge hotel ballroom, with a **HOTEL MANAGER**, 32.

BILL BANYON
... but *this*.

HOTEL MANAGER
The Augusta ballroom is booked this Sunday morning for the Hasboro Wedding Reception. But Mr. Hasboro has indicated that you are a close friend, and he would be willing to move back his own event for the Memorial of your father.

BILL BANYON
Great. Put it on his credit card.

Drew looks around the large room. Camera travels the expansive, ending on Drew's face.

DREW
(to himself, a stray thought)
What if nobody shows up?

EXT. AUNT DORA'S HOME – DAY – NOON

Exterior of the home. We hear Samson wail.

INT. AUNT DORA'S HOME – DAY

The foreground outer-room of Dora's home is dark, but we see the "Celebration Committee" working in the crowded lit-kitchen beyond. The sounds of loud kids, led by Samson, can be heard from the unseen living room adjacent to the kitchen.

BILL BANYON
Okay, so we've got the military bands, the seven

speakers, Kinko's is blowing up photos... the easels are purchased –

(looks up)

How are we doing with balloons?

DALE

I sent to Balloon City. I got a bunch of 'em.

CHARLES DEAN

Drew, the casket did come in from Lexington today. It's quite beautiful.

Drew nods. There is a pause.

BILL BANYON

Look, I'm getting the question constantly. Help us with an answer. Why isn't he buried in Elizabethtown?

Drew finds they're all staring at him.

DREW

(carefully)

It's not an insult to *anybody here*.

BILL BANYON

(beat)

Is there such a thing as *partial* cremation?

Aunt Dora, who cooks nearby, can't stifle a groan. Banyon shrugs, but Charles Dean looks angered at the notion. Concurrently in the next room, the noise level rises. Samson is shrieking like a banshee.

CHARLES DEAN

Well, I've heard in California, they divide people into twelve pieces and pass 'em out to family members, but it *ain't gonna happen here*!

DREW

(raising voice over din in next room)

I know you all love my dad. You can't dismiss Hollie's wishes. And *we're not from California.*

DALE

Jessie, *can you do something about your son*!?

Jessie exits. Dale speaks more quietly.

DALE
I think what Charles is saying, Drew, is –

DREW
– I know what he's saying. You all have different versions of him that you all love a lot. This is ours, *my* family's record of the *last thing he said on the subject*. That's the way it's going to be, guys. Sprinkled at sea. And that's the decision from California.
(beat)
Shit.
(beat)
*Oregon*.

They all laugh... and Drew laughs too. The noise begins to mount again in the adjacent living room. Aunt Lena brings cookies, coffee and Ale-8 to the table, along with Mona, who *stares* at Drew, as sound escalates. Drew remembers his gift from Claire.

DREW
Jessie, I have something –

Drew exits, pulling the video out of his backpack.

INT. AUNT DORA'S LIVING ROOM – NIGHT

Drew, adept at figuring out electronic gear, punches a few buttons and loads the video Claire gave him. The kids are still shrieking, tired and crying loudly over anything and everything. Their ringleader is, of course, Samson. Drew eases into a profile, looks Samson right in the eyes.

DREW
Hey Samson. This is for *you*.

Drew presses "play."

ON THE TELEVISION

A man of about 36, clad in denim with red hard-hat, speaks with his foot resting on the first step of a large truck. He's an unglamourous character, windblown and flushed with good hard work. Fifty yards behind him is a house. There is something about **RUSTY** that commands attention in young children. In his eyes is the look of *purpose*.

RUSTY

Hi. I'm Rusty.

Samson immediately falls silent. Mayhem has ceased. It is as if this man looks into the souls of reckless children.

RUSTY

I built this house behind me twelve years ago.
And today –

INT. AUNT DORA'S KITCHEN – NIGHT

The Planning committee in the next room realize something amazing is going on.

DALE

What's that sound?

AUNT LENA

Silence.

ON THE KITCHEN DOORWAY

The adults move cautiously into view, fascinated. The sound of sudden silence is deafening.

INT. LIVING ROOM – NIGHT

The kids are mesmerized, frozen in the exact position they occupied when Rusty first appeared.

RUSTY

– I'm going to *blow it up*.

The kids gasp. There's a massive intake of air.

ON SAMSON

who watches... strangely, deeply transifixed.

ON ADULTS IN THE DOORWAY

It's a miracle.

ON DREW AND JESSIE

watching Rusty with the kids.

ON THE TELEVISION – CLOSER – FULL-FRAME

Rusty does not talk down to his young audience. He treats them like fellow warriors. He leans forward and asks a question, his every word operating like a high-pitched frequency only children can truly hear.

RUSTY
Now. If I blow up this house... will you help me build a new house where the old house used to be?

ON THE KIDS

who nod vigorously.

ON RUSTY

Shot moves in.

RUSTY
(with gravity)
If I blow this house up, will you promise to behave and mind your Mommy and Daddy?

ON SAMSON

who experiences a revelation.

SAMSON
Yes.

Around him, kids nod quickly, with deep conviction. Samson stares respectfully at Rusty and Jessie sees it.

ON JESSIE

who turns to Drew.

JESSIE
(quietly, a little sad)
What I'd give to have him look at me like that.

ON RUSTY

who rewards his promise to the kids.

RUSTY
*Good.* Now let's *blow it up.*

The kids' eyes widen as they hold their breath.

ON THE ADULTS

who watch from the kitchen, lined up in the doorway.

ON THE TELEVISION MONITOR

Rusty with a control switcher linked to dynamite.

RUSTY
One... two... three...

Rusty presses the switcher. He detonates the old house behind him. *Ka-boom.* Smoke and ash fly through the air, replayed backwards and forwards from four different angles.

ON THE KIDS

as the wonder washes over their faces, wave after wave. They swoon with delight. The blue t.v. screen lights up their expressions.

ON RUSTY

RUSTY
Now let's build a new house.

ON SAMSON

who hooks an arm around his father's leg, and looks at Jessie happily. Like a son looks at a father.

ON DREW

who sees this, moved a little, by father and son. He almost... *almost* cries. He pats Jessie on the back and quickly returns to the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN – NIGHT

Drew enters and Uncle Dale looks at him with strange new respect.

DALE
Thank you for taking an interest in Jessie.

DREW

He's a good man.

ON JESSIE IN OUTER ROOM

watching his son watch the video. There is absolute joy on his son's face, and Jessie is marveling at the sight of it.

BILL BANYON

I can see Mitch right now – so proud – wearing that Blue Suit –

Aunt Dora enters and turns on the burner of the stove to begin a new cooking venture. She steps away to get the perfect pan.

BILL BANYON

... can't you?

ON THE MEN

in the kitchen. Silence descends for a moment as they all come to stare at the flame on the stove, all of them arriving at the same mental image...

ON MITCH'S PHOTO

on the wall of the kitchen.

ON THE FLAME

sputtering on the stove, with violent stabs of yellow flecking the blue flame.

ON DREW

who knows what must be done. He checks his watch.

ON RENTAL CAR KEYS

He snatches them up.

EXT. KENTUCKY TURNPIKE – NIGHT

Drew's car flies through the Kentucky night.

INT. DREW'S RENTAL CAR – NIGHT

Drew on cell. Checking his watch. It reads: 10:30 pm.

DREW
... yes, my name is Drew Baylor, and I'm calling to stop a cremation...

ON ADDRESS – RIPPED OUT OF PHONE BOOK

in hand. It reads: Hadley Funeral and Crematory, 24 Hour Emergency Services, 2332 St. Regis St.

INT. DREW'S RENTAL CAR – NIGHT – MINUTES LATER

Drew on the cell again.

DREW
... it's Drew Baylor, is anybody there? I'm calling *again*, about...

INT. DREW'S RENTAL CAR – NIGHT

Road construction has halted traffic. Drew powers down the window and speaks to a Foreman.

DREW
... I have to stop a cremation in Loua -vull!

His pronunciation is perfect. The Foreman consider this request, waves him through.

EXT. KENTUCKY HIGHWAY – NIGHT

Drew's car rips down the highway to Louisville.

EXT. STREET – NIGHT

Drew screeches down a road marked St. Regis Ave.

EXT. LOUISVILLE CREMATORY – NIGHT – WIDE SHOT

The same beautiful grounds from the day before, now moody and empty and dark. Drew bangs on the door.

DREW
STOP THE CREMATION!!!!!

The door opens suddenly as the Young Worker stands ready to help.

INT. EMPTY FRONT OFFICE/CREMATORY – NIGHT

The Young Worker moves quickly into the back room, motioning for Drew to wait just a moment. Drew stands in the darkened Crematory office waiting. He looks at an answering machine at an unmanned darkened desk, blinking with his unheard messages. One flourescent light is on at the back. The Young Worker returns with an apologetic shrug, *too late*, holding...

THE PURPLE URN

now much heavier, as he hands it over to Drew wordlessly. Drew holds the Purple Urn in his hands. Music.

EXT. CREMATORY PARKING LOT – NIGHT

Drew puts the Purple Urn in the trunk, and closes it. He takes a few steps. It doesn't feel right. He returns and pops the trunk open again.

INT. DREW'S RENTAL CAR – NIGHT

Drew dutifully straps the Urn into the passenger seat. Somehow the Urn looks oddly comfortable now, riding alongside Drew.

EXT. HYATT PARKING LOT – NIGHT

Back at the hotel. Drew now exits his car after another long day, adjusting his backpack, hands in pockets. He walks a few steps and then stops. He feels guilty *again*, as he looks back at the car.

INT. DREW'S RENTAL CAR – NIGHT

Drew unbuckles the passenger safety-belt, and removes the Purple Urn.

INT. HYATT HOTEL – NIGHT

A peaceful melancholy slips over the lobby as Drew walks with the Purple Urn under his arm like a bongo. Front Desk Girl Charlotte types and looks up. She sees the urn, and knows. He tips the urn to her. He turns to see...

Claire in evening dress, lingering on outskirts of Chuck and Cindy's wedding group, looking gorgeous and holding a bright pink Cosmopolitan. He collapses into the big leather seat near her. Claire falls into the seat next to him. Silently they watch the Chuck and Cindy traffic. She's had a few drinks with a few new friends from the wedding party, who wave goodnight to her. Drew considers putting the Urn on the floor. Instead, he puts it on the table between them.

CLAIRE
(off urn)
Is that?

Drew nods.

CLAIRE
Hey Mitch. Can I get you something – you look a little bit thirsty –

DREW
He's fine –
(beat)
So what happened to Ben?

She makes a noise.

CLAIRE
(all too familiar)
There was a storm in Georgia, they grounded all the planes, and he doesn't like to fly and they want him to speak at a Trustees Event and trot out some Big Ideas.

DREW
Well, you look great.

CLAIRE
Oh, I'm a mess.

DREW
You're crazy, Claire, you look *amazing*.
And this dress –

CLAIRE
(waves away compliment)
Did well on the Personnel interview, though.

DREW
Right – the *interview* – I forgot –

CLAIRE
(grandly self-deprecating)
I know. I'm impossible to forget, but I'm *hard to remember.*

DREW
You put yourself down too much.

CLAIRE
Don't fall for it. I actually believe in myself quite a bit.

DREW
Hey – let's show Mitch the site of his Memorial.

INT. AUGUSTA BALLROOM LOBBY – NIGHT

Balancing her glass, Claire joins Drew in swinging open the heavy doors to the empty hotel ballroom marked: Hasboro Wedding Rehearsal.

The remains of an earlier function are obvious in the haphazard array of chairs, a cabinet and catering remnants. Claire drains her drink, and heads for the podium. She clicks on the microphone, and grips both sides of the stand like a Presidential candidate. Her voice is very loud, and she addresses the empty ballroom.

CLAIRE
WELCOME TO THE ANNUAL MEETING
OF PEOPLE WHO... *ANNUALLY MEET.*

She is a bit drunk. Drew laughs politely and applauds.

DREW
(setting urn down)
Very nice. Come on –

CLAIRE
AND WE'LL SEE YOU ALL AGAIN *NEXT YEAR!*

She laughs. He takes her arm – it's physical contact, and for a moment she finds herself in his arms, facing away. This is how their bodies feel together. They've inadvertently broken a barrier, and both know it. She pushes away.

CLAIRE
I'm just going to say – right now – what we're not saying. And let the chips fall, let the chips fall, let the chips *fall*... where they may... yes I'm drunk, and...
(slightly confusing *herself*)
I may be embarrassing myself, but I'm just going to say it...

She wrenches free, and returns to the podium, back on the microphone, pressing her mouth way too close and it amplifies.

CLAIRE
I... *LLLLIKE* YOU.

Drew nods and has to laugh.

CLAIRE
(off his look)
What?

DREW
I think you should eat something.

CLAIRE
I have been starving myself all week long –

DREW
For *Ben*?

CLAIRE
– and I am gonna *eat*.

DREW
We'll eat in my room –

CLAIRE
(perking up)
Room service! I want cheese... and cheese-related *things*... no... eggs and fries! With cheese on everything.

DREW
Cheese it is. And don't worry, as great as you look tonight – you are safe with me.

CLAIRE
Of course it's safe! It's a full moon. You're here. I look good. I'm wearing these clothes. Have you ever had unlucky clothes?? This dress that you *like* – good things have not happened to me in this dress. But I saw it tonight, and I said, "I'm going to give you one more chance." And I *refuse to be let down by this dress again*. Anyway, forget all that! You're

here, and we're together. It's a get-out-of-jail-free card. It's almost midnight. Life cannot be so cruel that we don't deserve to be together.

(covering her tracks)

To *eat*.

He leads her to the door.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY – DAY

They walk to the room. We see them at the far end of the Chuck and Cindy-festooned hallway.

CLAIRE

Wait. Where's Mitch?

Drew stops.

DREW

*Shit*. I left him in the ballroom.

They run back down the hallway, towards us, at full-speed.

INT. BALLROOM – NIGHT

The Purple Urn is the only bit of color in the huge ballroom.

DREW

Whew.

She hooks her arm around him and walks him back to the Urn.

DREW

I'm sorry Ben missed the flight.

They arrive at the Urn. Claire looks at Drew, pregnant with something she needs to say. Drew sees her discomfort, and fills in the blanks.

DREW

He forgot.

She looks at him, as he touches her arm with real compassion. She doesn't answer.

DREW

No storm in Georgia?

She says nothing. His compassion increases.

DREW

No Trustees?

CLAIRE

No.

DREW

No Big Ideas?

She shakes her head, no.

DREW

*What a fuckin' jerk!*

CLAIRE

He's not a jerk. He's a brilliant man who gives himself permission to be pre-occupied.

DREW

Come on! You know, I'll tell you, there is nothing greater than deciding in your life that things maybe really are *black and white*. And this guy "Ben" who clearly takes you for granted, who serially takes advantage of you... Is *bad*. And what I'm saying is *good*. See what I mean? Black and white. You shouldn't be a substitute for anybody! This guy should be right *here*, right *now*, doing *this*.

He kisses her.

CLAIRE
(flushed)

Maybe so.

DREW

He's lucky I'm not the right person for you.

He kisses her lightly, again.

CLAIRE

I know why it's not you, but just tell me so I know from your perspective.

DREW
See, I know what you deserve.

CLAIRE
(private longing)
What do I deserve?

Drew looks at her, moves behind her as she faces camera. (He is unseen by her.)

DREW
You deserve...

Lost for the words himself, he picks up a piece of paper from the Hasboro Wedding Rehearsal table.

DREW
You deserve a guy who says... "I can't imagine a world without you... "

ON HER BACK

from his point-of-view. She shudders.

DREW
"We will start a winery when we are 70."

ON HER BACK

she considers it. She likes the direction.

DREW
"We will snowboard every December and one day take our kids... "

ON CLAIRE

with him in the background. She thrills to these words.

DREW
"And we will always have the twin red Lexus' with the license plates reading: Chuck... and Cindy."

She turns, knowing the words are not his.

DREW
You deserve all this and more.

She laughs, bittersweet.

CLAIRE
It's not you, I know.

They kiss again. Her skin has it's own quietly addictive quality. He finds he has to kiss her again, a little woozy with the pleasure of it all, and then pulls away reluctantly.

DREW
Please don't take this as rejection.

CLAIRE
I really don't.

He finds her mouth, and there is no way back. They sink to the ground, as he places the urn recklessly on a table. And this is what it's like to *really* kiss her. After an interval, they pull away. They sit there on the floor, disheveled. Claire looks up at the urn on the table. Claire is a little light-headed. Clearly, it was a great kiss. They *are* on the floor. They regard each other, and the sudden difference between them. There is silence for a moment.

DREW
Ben's very lucky. All we did was kiss.

Beat. Thoughtful moment passes.

CLAIRE
Most of the sex I've had in my life was not as personal as that kiss.

INT. DREW'S HOTEL ROOM – EARLY MORNING

Claire crawls on hands and knees to retrieve a shoe from under the bed. She finds it, and rises up to sit on the edge of the bed. She admires Drew, the sleeping lump facing the wall in a red t-shirt.

CLAIRE
(quiet, testing volume)
Putting on my shoes now...

She purposely bounces on the edge of his bed, checking over her shoulder for signs of life.

ON TELEVISION

a Saturday morning Travel Network special about skindiving in Australia. An impossibly fit blonde surfer girl talks about diving. Claire turns it *off*.

CLAIRE
(hopeful of waking him up)
Hey! Absence of noise!

He doesn't budge. Then stirs a little. She "accidentally" knocks herself against the side of the bed.

CLAIRE
Oops! Excuse me. Sorry.

Now she loudly drops her bag. It falls, noisy with keys. He doesn't budge. She picks it up.

CLAIRE
(quietly, musical)
... walking out door...

Silence. She continues giving him extra chances.

CLAIRE
... in last night's clothes...

Silence. She moves to the door. No reaction. Music begins, as she sees the remnants of last night's room service (eggs and fries).

CLAIRE
Hey Claire! Stay! *Don't leave*. Let's have breakfast!!

He doesn't move. She's performing for an audience of one – herself. She takes a moment, and looks at him. It feels like a goodbye. She sure does like him. She mimes taking a "snapshot." She bends down to his sleeping form for one last goodbye.

CLAIRE
(quietly)
I will miss your lips and everything attached
to them.

She turns and walks to the door, bending into profile to bid goodbye to the Purple Urn.

CLAIRE
See ya, Mitch.

She opens the top of the Urn and looks inside for a moment.

CLAIRE
Now we've both seen each other naked.

She replaces the top, and camera lingers on the Urn. We hear the sound of a door shutting.

EXT. HYATT HOTEL LOBBY – MORNING

Elevator door opens, and the Lobby is alive with activity. A huge line at the front desk, the most crowded we've seen it. Claire attempts grace in last night's clothes. She turns the corner and sees all the same Chuck and Cindy people from the night before.

VOICE
Hey Claire!

She darts the other way to avoid them.

INT. DREW'S HOTEL ROOM WINDOW – MORNING

The back of Drew's head is in frame briefly, as the shot is angled down on the parking lot. We see the small figure of Claire moving diagonally across the asphalt lined with trees. We hear a door shut. After a beat, a small figure in a red t-shirt sprints across the parking lot to her.

DREW
Hey!

EXT. PARKING LOT – MORNING

Claire turns, overjoyed to hear Drew's voice.

CLAIRE
Aw, just tell me you love me and get it over with.

Drew looks at her, takes a breath and speaks his truth. Behind him, a flower truck pulls up and begins unloading ornate floral arrangements.

DREW
(in a rush)
Claire. Four days ago... I lost a major American shoe company... well you could round it off to *one billion dollars*. And by tomorrow afternoon, the whole world, everyone will know. Something is going to be published that pinpoints *me* as the most spectacular failure in the history of my profession,

which is all I know. And I am here trying to be responsible, and *charming*, and live up to something I'm not, and all I really want is to... *not be here*, do you understand?

She nods. It's all coming out, with no filter.

DREW
What you're seeing is not me – actually, almost everything that has happened between us is not really who I am at all. It's an incredible simulation, but it's not me. The real me is a *joke*. So you know... feel free to laugh, but those are the hell hounds on my particular trail.

She is stilled by the news. In the background, a food truck now arrives, and begins unloading catering tables.

CLAIRE
A billion dollars, huh?

DREW
(gravely)
Rounded off – yes.

CLAIRE
Was it your money?

DREW
No.

She explodes in relief.

CLAIRE
*Then what are you worried about?!*

He's puzzled at her frivolity. Immediately:

DREW
Because it's my fault! It was my design!

CLAIRE
(a little angry)
It's *not your fault*! None of it is your fault!
*Some* of it is your fault...

She laughs. He turns frosty.

DREW
Well I'm happy to entertain you –
(off her look)
What?

CLAIRE
I'm sorry, I guess I thought a small part of you might be a small bit sad to see me go. But I guess this is all mostly about a shoe.

DREW
Of *course* I'm sad about you.

She's *instantly serious*. This is who she is:

CLAIRE
Some company who took a gamble on you because it's their business to *gamble*... and it's also their business to use you as a *scapegoat*. Come *on*. You're an artist, man. Your job is to break through barriers, not accept blame and bow and say "Thank you, I'll go away now." Come on. Of course he's going to screw you over if he can! He's a *Phil!*

Drew looks a little stunned at the quality of her advice.

CLAIRE
You're welcome. Now quit trying to break up with me.

DREW
Claire –

CLAIRE
(a little angry)
You're always trying to break up with me, and we're not even together!

He's suddenly relieved. And then disappointed.

DREW
We're not?

CLAIRE
We're the Substitute People, remember?

Behind him, a large netting of white balloons are carried in. Claire smiles politely, almost *professionally*, and gets in her car. He stands there, watching her leave, maybe forever, in her unlucky dress. (Theme begins indicating this as a "last look.")

CLAIRE
I'll see you at the Memorial if I can make it.

DREW
How does it work that somehow *I* disappoint you,
but the guy who doesn't show up *at all* is a genius
who's *allowed* to be pre-occupied?

Claire shuts the door, still professional. She waves sweetly.

DREW
(thrown-away, to himself)
It's like he doesn't even exist.

Then it hits him. No, it couldn't be. He watches her car disappear. He's engulfed with a growing doubt. *Does Ben even exist?*

INT. MAN 'O WAR AIRPORT – LATER DAY

Drew waits in the Lexington airport. Hollie steps off the plane with heroic majesty. She has come to face the ceremonies, here in the heart of her lost husband's homeland. Behind her, looking relaxed and very stoned on prescription medication, is Heather. Hollie, however, possesses some strange new confidence and power. She hugs her son and daughter, all of them together here in the airport. She pulls away and announces:

HOLLIE
Darling. I have found that I am funny.

Drew shares a look with Heather, who quietly shakes her head. He hugs them both, as Hollie takes in these new surroundings. The smell of disaster is in the air.

FADE OUT:

FADE UP:

INT. HOTEL BALLROOM – LATE AFTERNOON

Drew pulls the curtain aside, just a little, and we are allowed a surreptitious look at the arriving crowd. It's a *huge* turn-out. Crowd members, many dressed formally, have arrived early and are already filling the ballroom. He smiles at the charm and ritual that so defines this town.

SERIES OF SHOTS

1) The Military Band plays at the side of the ballroom near the stage.

2) Guests look at large posters of Mitchell Baylor displayed around the lobby on easels.

3) Guests looking at the program booklet.

4) Samson is dressed in a little man's suit, which he's pulling and tugging at uncomfortably, as he watches Jessie set up his drums with other band members (behind the curtain). Samson climbs on the drum kit and plays a little.

5) A slide projector clicks images on a screen in front of the curtain. Balloons and flowers are everywhere in this large, beautifully-outfitted ballroom. All the best of intentions are in play. And the gathering crowd feels it. Something great could happen tonight.

6) On the proud banner across the top of the stage:

"IF IT WASN'T THIS... IT'D BE SOMETHING ELSE"

M.B.

Hollie and Heather join Drew, looking out from the behind the curtain, watching silently.

INT. SIDE OF STAGE – DAY

Jessie Baylor stands with an **ELECTRICIAN**, 21, looking at a pulley.

JESSIE
Okay, so when I give you the signal –
(demonstrates with drumstick)
– pull the pulley *slowly* across.

ELECTRICIAN
Will do.

JESSIE
It's all planned out with the song.

INT. MAIN BALLROOM AREA – NIGHT

Drew takes Mom and Heather to the seats. There is a reserved seating red rope across the seats in the front. Nervous, yet exquisitely poised, Hollie nods hello to the unfamiliar faces in the surrounding family section and beyond. She knows all eyes are on her. Hollie sits down and looks up at a photo of Mitch and herself, slide-projected on the back curtain/screen.

ON HOLLIE

in profile, staring up at her former life, blown up to screen-size.

Heather looks around, glazed, it's all Fantasia to her.

HEATHER
Somewhere Dad is *freaking out*.

ON DREW

who looks around for Claire. She's not here.

INT. BALLROOM/MEMORIAL STAGE – NIGHT

We meet a series of speakers who express their feelings of love and regret. Their comments all form a single monologue of what a sudden death stirs up in surviving loved ones. (Note: Each face offers a look of realistic character, of people inexperienced at the podium, unaccustomed to such displays of emotion.)

1) Childhood friend **SHARON**, 55ish.

SHARON
Mitch wrote letters...

2) Uncle Dale at the podium.

UNCLE DALE
... he was always there for me but was I there for him...

3) **DES**, 55, black, is Mitch's classmate from West Point.

DES
... he would show us pictures of his granddaughter...

4) **RAYMOND**, dignified in bow-tie, gives his testimonial.

RAYMOND
... and he was so proud of Heather and his son
and his success with the Spa... the Spoo... you know,
that shoe... because in all of his projects after the military –
except his family... something always went off the rails...

5) Connie, his high-school girlfriend, the one with all the memorabilia.

CONNIE
... and I loved him...

6) Aunt Dora at the podium.

AUNT DORA
... even though he moved to California, he came
back every year...

7) **JOE** is 57.

JOE
... and it wasn't easy for him to leave the military
and start over in California and...

8) Bill Banyon at the podium. With wrenching difficulty:

BILL BANYON
... and I apologize, per se, for my role in that deal,
per se...

9) Drew at the podium.

DREW
... and I never could understand those fathers who
didn't say "I love you." Because he said it all the time.
So I have nothing to complain about except that he's gone.
(beat)
And to all of you who put this evening together,
it has gone beautifully, and thank you.
(beat)
Ladies and Gentlemen, Hollie Baylor.

INT. BALLROOM PODIUM – NIGHT – MINUTES LATER

Hollie rises and begins walking to the stage. In every public event, a crowd craves some kind of drama. This is drama. She walks resolutely, from her front row seat to the podium. Hollie takes the stage in a dark pant-suit with flared bottoms. She stands at the microphone, just the spotlight, a silver sun in her face. There is silence save for the light but pervasive sound of sniffling. Hundreds of unseen faces now judge her in the darkness. She takes a breath. The spotlight feels hot, and it crosses her line of vision. She's blinded for a short time. There is a single judgmental-sounding cough in the dark.

HOLLIE
I'm a little nervous, but here we are.

Silence.

HOLLIE
Thanks for coming, and thank you for inviting me. I'm glad I got on that plane. It's been a while.
(beat)
He talked so much about all of you, and late at night I'd often hear the typing of one of his *long detailed letters*, answering a simple question in 30 single-spaced pages. Always on Saturday, that was his day to type letters. Saturday was the day he devoted to you. And how right that today is a Saturday.

SHOT OF KNOWING LOOK

on an on-lookers face.

HOLLIE
And there was the shorthand of a long marriage. We were complete opposites – and it worked.

Hollie withdraws the microphone from the podium stand and begins to walk. (She is the first to use any part of the stage, and the first to realize the microphone was cordless all along.) And in that moment, she comes to life, speaking from her heart. Even the *tone* of her voice sounds different, less guarded, more free.

HOLLIE
There are three islands of security in this world. Health, love and work. I lost them all in a single phone call. I am a widow.

SHOT OF BILL BANYON

watching. Where is this going?

SHOT OF HEATHER

stoned, staring.

ON HOLLIE

getting her footing on this stage, as thoughts begin to come out of her, sans editing.

HOLLIE
The plan was to send my son here to represent us. I was terrified that you'd look at me and see – the Woman From California...
(silent beat)
The one who *took him*. And though we only lived there as a family for eighteen months *twenty-seven years ago*... I've always felt it. I'm the one. He was your boy, Mitchie, on his way home from the war. And somehow I hijacked him, and took him to... to Disneyland!

A little bit of forced laughter.

HOLLIE
He didn't come home. Didn't start the business with Dale...

ON DALE

listening.

HOLLIE
Left the military later to be a father to Drew...

ON DREW

listening.

HOLLIE
Didn't marry the person everybody thought he would...

ON CONNIE

who watches Hollie with curiosity and no small jealousy.

HOLLIE
And *we* never talked about any of it, we just built layers on top of layers and we argued about the layers. Layers of bullshit.

ON DREW

shaking his head – no – trying to catch Hollie's attention.

ON HOLLIE

who doesn't see it.

HOLLIE
All because I was standing in an elevator in Tokyo, and a handsome Captain walked in, on the way back to Elizabethtown, and... he was engaged and I was engaged too! And... something happened between us, that was not *(God forbid)* *"part of the plan."*

A rampant silence has filled the room.

HOLLIE
But we were in love.
(beat, fast)
And I know the rap on me. I'm a humorless liberal Catholic and I never took the time to know all of you, and for that I am sorry. And I criticized somebody's cooking on my last visit here, but as I'll tell you in a moment, I'm now a struggling cook myself, I know how hard it is, please forgive me, and I say that as a humorless liberal Catholic who is apparently... still humorless.

ON THE FACES OF DREW AND HEATHER

horrified that she is actually trying to make jokes. Somewhere, another cough.

ON HOLLIE

She is only starting to warm to the occasion. She's finding her voice now, confiding in the audience.

HOLLIE
Let me tell you about life without Mitch.

ON FACES

watching.

HOLLIE
I tried to learn about Mitch's car. It actually ate me. I went to the bank. The teller looked at me strangely, and when I got home I looked in the mirror. My face was still green from a facial mask I forgot to take off. I called the Insurance Man of *thirty years*, whose son Mitch helped get into West Point, to tell him Mitch was gone. He didn't call me back for two days.
(beat)
The car. The bank. The Insurance Man. The world. Nobody truly cared. Not like us.

Hollie pauses, almost loses her way, then regains her footing.

HOLLIE
And then there was daylight.

HER POV

as the spotlight crosses her vision.

HOLLIE
I knew what the answer was. The answer was *joy*. That's what Mitch wanted.

ON HEATHER

watching, stoned.

HOLLIE
I always wanted to learn to tap-dance. So I took lessons. And I wanted to cook, organically, so I

attempted that. And I fixed the toilet. All by myself.
(irritated screed)
How are we able to put a man on the moon and toilets are still as bad as when I was a kid... the suction ball that keeps flapping! *That damn suction ball!!* Well, I learned to fix it.

There is genuine laughter, and it surprises her.

HOLLIE
And I wanted to learn to laugh. Why wasn't I this funny when he was alive!? Best I can figure...
(beat)
It takes time to be funny. It takes time to extract joy from life.

SHOT OF SOMEONE

who nods in quiet agreement.

HOLLIE
So I enrolled in Comedy School.

Big laugh. Hollie rolls with it, laughs a little herself at the irony.

SHOT OF STERN-LOOKING MAN

who still isn't buying it, though all around him is laughter.

HOLLIE
I was the oldest one in the class. And I was told to tell one story, a true story, about real life, something that happened to me. So I got up there, and talked a little bit about my husband and the love he left behind. A few days after Mitch died, the next-door neighbor, one of Mitch's good friends, Bob, saw that I was going through the gate and he said, "I'm so sorry for your loss." And I knew he needed to feel that loss, and share it. And I wanted to help him. He put his arms around me, cradled me, and his embrace tightened. *Finally*, here was someone who *truly cared. And who you are in times of crisis is who you really are.*
(perfect beat)
Then I felt something else.

She lets the moment hang, as slow knowing spreads through the crowd.

HOLLIE
A *huge*... well, let's just say it... a boner.

Huge laughs.

HOLLIE
That's what I get for trying to do everything myself.

ON HEATHER

who turns to Drew, with eyes wide. *What is happening*?

HOLLIE
Boner Bob. My neighbor.

Laughs double.

HOLLIE
People handle grief in different ways!

Laughs *quadruple*. She laughs herself. These are big, big laughs.

ON DREW

watching, stunned, in disbelief.

HOLLIE
Mitch believed in people. Some let him down.

SHOT OF BILL BANYON

watching, hurting.

HOLLIE
William Banyon. *You know what you did*. And I know what you did. And I'm an inch...
(it's not easy)
... or *two* inches away from forgiving you.

SHOT OF GROUPS OF PEOPLE

watching. Feeling her words.

HOLLIE
But some *didn't* let him down. Sometimes those thirty pages letters helped his friends get rich, or gave advice or just made 'em happy. He rooted for all of you. And he loved his family, my patient daughter and my busy son. And he was not bitter. He was more playful then maybe some of you knew –

ON DREW

listening to these words which strike home.

HOLLIE
But here's some advice I can give to you –

She gestures around the beautiful ballroom.

HOLLIE
Give all these gifts to the living. Do it now. Be embarrassing. Don't wait for the perfect time. Mitch is gone, and Boner Bob lives on. That's life.

She shakes her head, laughs to herself. Deep, knowing laughs surround her.

HOLLIE
I may need your help. I haven't been single since I was 18. And that was... that was a couple years ago.

Big forgiving laughs.

HOLLIE
One last Mitch story. We were walking one night and I asked him – "what should I do if, God forbid, something happens and you go before I do. How do you want to be buried?" And he looked at me and smiled and said –

(beat)

"Surprise me."

Appreciative laughter, and some applause.

HOLLIE
This would have surprised him.

She addresses the slide-portrait of Mitch above the podium.

HOLLIE
And I'm going to surprise you, too. I love you.

She gives her signal for the music.

HOLLIE
This is for you. Your favorite song. On a Saturday night.

It's Henry Mancini's "Moon River" instrumental... and Hollie begins to tap-dance. Slowly, with basic moves. Lights reduce to a single spotlight and it is her moment of absolute grace. Hollie reaches a wobbly crescendo to *huge* applause. The strange sad freedom of her movements is fearless, and funny, and quite beautiful. Finally, *finally*, they understand Hollie, the woman Mitch married. The sound of a standing ovation rings over onto...

INT. BALLROOM LOBBY – NIGHT

Drew stands alone, taking a breather from the event. He hears a small commotion, and turns to see... Claire arriving, dress swishing as she moves quickly. He is genuinely surprised and happy to see her. They are alone in the lobby.

CLAIRE
Oh my God – nobody showed.

DREW
*Everybody* showed.

Claire draws closer. She looks great, but seems a touch distant. Both search each others faces for clues to where they stand.

CLAIRE
Well, you know... I have this thing for you.

For a moment, all his pressing business, even The Plan is shattered. His heart privately races. And then he realizes the "thing" for him is actually a *thing for him*. Claire pulls a brown wooden box from her unwieldy looking shoulder bag.

CLAIRE
It's a very unique map. It's for your road trip home.

DREW
(a touch disappointed)
Right – a map –

CLAIRE
(studies his face)
You promised, remember.

DREW
No, I do. I remember.

Both continue studying every detail in the other, both curious and auditioning grander plans.

INT. BALLROOM – NIGHT – SAME TIME

The curtain parts. Jessie Baylor and his band begin the epic, mournful introduction to Lynyrd Skynyrd's "Freebird.

ON A LARGE WHITE BIRD

made of paper and plaster, waiting behind the curtain in the wings. It's very close to a spotlight, and that is not good proximity.

JESSIE
If I leave here tomorrow...

ON THE LARGE WHITE BIRD

which is starting to catch fire. Unseen by the audience.

INT. BALLROOM – NIGHT – SAME TIME

Claire and Drew together in the empty ballroom lobby. She hears the music inside.

CLAIRE
"Freebird," huh?

DREW
(still can't believe it)
It's actually going well. On some level, I think
this is all part of Mitch's joke...

CLAIRE
Well – I better get back to –

DREW
Ben?

CLAIRE
He finally made it.

DREW
(bittersweet, off box)
Well, thanks for the ice cream cone.

CLAIRE
It's not an ice cream cone!

DREW
No, I know... I'm just... making a joke.
Apparently I come from a family of comedians.

She laughs a little.

CLAIRE
Call me Pollyanna, but it's all good... and I don't even say "it's all good" either.

DREW
Does Ben even exist?

CLAIRE
Just call me when you get home, and not until. I want you to get into the deep, beautiful melancholy of everything that's happened. Speaking of which... I have to see what this looks like...

She gestures to the ballroom, and they are drawn to an open doorway to watch...

INT. BALLROOM – NIGHT

Jessie performs soulfully.

JESSIE
'Cause I'm as free as a bird now
And this bird you cannot change...

Jessie makes a subtle-motion with his drumstick, to the electrician off-stage.

ON LARGE WHITE BIRD

which is starting to smoke and catch fire. (And not intentionally.) The bird now descends on a pulley, on fire.

THE PULLEY

cannot hold the weight of the bird.

ON THE AUDIENCE

gasping as they see the bird is on fire, breaking free of the pulley, as if it cannot be contained.

ON THE BIRD

which gains flight over the audience as it explodes into flames.

ON THE AUDIENCE

screaming and scattering as the flaming bird sails above their heads, heading for a landing in the crowd.

ON DREW AND CLAIRE

watching as mayhem breaks loose. Everyone heads for the exits.

ON THE SPRINKLER BIRDS

along the ceiling of the ballroom, which surge to life with survival-rain.

ON FIERY BANNER ABOVE STAGE ("If It Wasn't This, It'd Be Something Else.")

falling to earth like the Hindenberg, breaking apart. The only words that haven't been burned away are: "Something Else."

WIDE-SHOT

Water cascades over the well-dressed crowd streaming for the exits in pandemonium.

MEDIUM-CLOSE ON JESSIE

who keeps playing through the mayhem. He won't give up the stage, and keeps playing

"Freebird," heroically, through the chaos. Fiery bits of banner and water cascade through frame.

ON DREW AND CLAIRE

caught in the mayhem. People racing for air, and escaping the certain inferno. We are now in full fiasco mode, a place where absurdity and danger reign supreme.

SHOTS OF GUESTS

scrambling for the exits. Rarely has a memorial made people strive so vividly to embrace life

ON CONNIE

grabbing a high-school poster photo from an easel, slipping it under her arm and saving it from damage.

ON DREW

helping a glazed Heather to an exit door. A Woman Dressed in Finery passes in haste. She's dripping wet, and somewhat anxious to get out of the place... but she clings to what's real to her, *good manners*. She grabs Drew's arm and looks into his eyes before exiting quickly:

WOMAN IN FINERY
Thank you for a lovely time.

Drew is separated from Claire. His voice-over returns – thoughtful and personal and informative.

DREW'S VOICE
As a specialist in the field of last looks, this one was pretty iconically *Claire*.

ON CLAIRE

This is his last look at her. She looks over to Drew, says goodbye with her eyes, as she goes to work proficiently directing frightened human traffic through the doors of the ballroom. This is her greatest instinct, in full-bloom, aiding strangers in crisis. It already looks like a memory.

ON CHUCK HASBORO

hauling ass toward Drew, with Cindy a few steps behind. They are both hysterically angry, as they reach Drew.

CHUCK
*I trusted you!*

He shoves Drew violently, snapping him out of the reverie, interrupting the voice-over, and then hitting him, knocking him into a row of easels featuring photos of his father. A fight breaks out between them, as guests flee. It's a melee within a melee.

CINDY
You ruined our wedding! *Dude, I hope you have insurance!*

All are separated by the sprinkler-drenched human traffic. As theme music continues:

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOTEL LOBBY – MORNING

Drew stands at the front desk looking guilty. He already knows what's coming. Front Desk Girl Charlotte examines the room costs on the computer screen as she hums along on her keyboard. In the background, the Chuck and Cindy wedding party has transferred outdoors for what appears to be a beautiful day. She never stops typing.

CHARLOTTE
Your bill is $53,212, which is --
(nervous throat clear)
– beyond your credit limit, and...
(pause)
Just go. Go. Leave now. *Get out of here.*

She motions to the door with her eyes. He exits furtively with bags and the Urn under his arm.

EXT. CEMETERY/THE FAMILY PLOT – LATER MORNING

The Elizabethtown cemetary. An absolutely beautiful day, the brightest day of the year. Only the faithful few are here at the Baylor funeral. Charles Dean speaks with the portable stereo-system. What was once just a small grassy space is festooned with flowers and color.

Jessie Baylor wears sunglasses, white shirt, a tie, and a long leather jacket. Samson, wearing a helmet, stands near Drew. Staring Mona stares at Drew. Aunt Dora and Aunt Lena stand near Uncle Roy and Uncle Dale. Heather and Hollie stand near Bill Banyon. Hollie looks at Banyon. They have all shared a crisis together. Everybody is in sunglasses and jackets. It was a long night. Under a tent-awning, the open-casket rests with a flag, soaking in the last few moments of its life above ground. Nearby is the Purple Urn. Drew looks down at the casket.

ON THE CASKET

It is empty save for some clippings... several medals... and, resting proudly on the perfect indigo lining of a fine old casket from Louisville is The Blue Suit. Drew watches as Charles Dean swings

the casket door downward and clamps it shut. Steel wheels engage to mechanically lower the casket into the ground. The gears engage and turn, and the coffin lowers... lowers... and then... it catches. It is stuck.

ON FACES OF THE TIRED FAITHFUL FEW

Frozen, expectant, exhausted.

ON DREW

who watches knowingly. It's Funeral-Interruptus, all over again. Of *course* this wouldn't be easy, to the very end.

ON THE GEARS

which rumble back to life.

DREW

He's grown oddly attached to that coffin... and the details of the man who was almost inside of it. Drew is possessed with a strange feeling – he can't bear for it to end, and he can't bear for it to continue.

ON THE CASKET

which lands on the bottom of the grave with a thud.

SHOVELS

of dirt cover the coffin.

ON THE FAITHFUL FEW

still lingering behind. Uncle Dale presents Drew with a final gift, a valuable military sword that once belonged to Mitch. Dale unsheathes the mighty weapon to display it's gleaming blade. Drew stares at it, igniting him with a glint of purpose.

DREW'S VOICE
I began to think about what would be hitting the newsstands in just a few hours.

DREW
(appreciatively)
Thank you. I know just where to put this.

Jessie hugs Drew with great appreciation. He has blessed Jessie with attention, and it has made him noble. Hollie hooks an arm around her son. Privately:

HOLLIE
Cheer up. It's only a funeral.

Drew and Heather regard their mother, who is clearly nurturing a new beginning. And it's pretty funny.

ON BANYON

back at the grave, crying like a baby.

ON DREW

who struggles with a case of Ale-8 as he gets in the car. He takes a last look.

ON SAMSON

and Drew's gaze goes to the boy's shoes. He's wearing Spasmoticas.

INT. DREW'S RENTAL CAR – DAY

Drew straps in the Urn. He's assembled what he'll need for the drive. An Ale-8, and Claire's wooden box. He opens it. As a "map," it's a meticulous project made by a seasoned traveler, filled with pages of writing and illustrations on easily-held notecards, with color-coded post-its and map attachments, along with detailed footnotes.

DREW'S VOICE
The route of Claire's map – with accompanying music – would take 42 hours and 11 minutes.

With utmost gravity, he loads CD # 1.

DREW
(reading her directions)
"Turn on ignition... "

He does so, looking back one last time. As car criss-cross, exiting, only Staring Mona is left on the gravesite, with a small wave, with a slight gentle smile.

EXT. HIGHWAY – DAY

We're alongside Drew, consulting her directions.

DREW
"Begin your journey and do not skip ahead."

THE BICYCLE KID

leads the car, escorting Drew out of town.

ON PASSING HOUSES

Drew's last looks at Elizabethtown.

DREW'S VOICE
She had laid out the entire road-trip, and timed it to music she herself had put on CD's...

ON THE BICYCLE KID

who watches Drew get on Highway 12 and leave town.

DREW
(reading her directions)
"Press play."

He does so, as we hear rousing music.

EXT. HIGHWAY – DAY

The car speeds forward.

INT. DREW'S RENTAL CAR – DAY

He faces forward with steadfast determination.

DREW'S VOICE
The songs, of course, were classic mix-tape songs... about *her*, of *course*...
(bemused)
... and the rich flurry of our almost-romance...

ON PASSING EXIT SIGN – 60B

Drew regards his old friend, the troublesome exit, as it slips into his past. He looks at the mess of information, the clipped pages of instructions and the color-coded post-its.

DREW
(glumly, guy-to-guy, to urn)
Forty-two hours of *chick music.*

DREW'S VOICE
It was Sunday afternoon.

EXT. NEWSSTAND – DAY

Drew moves across the newsstand until he finds the new issue of *Modern Business Journal.*

DREW'S VOICE
And she had even provided music for what would happen next. Down to the *minute...*

ON MODERN BUSINESS JOURNAL MAGAZINE

The new issue is on the stands. Another magazine has been carelessly placed on top of it. Drew painfully pulls aside the covering magazine. The *Modern Business Journal* cover features only a funereal black-rimmed portrait of the Spasmotica, and this electric word: FIASCO!

DREW
"You have five minutes to wallow in the delicious misery. Enjoy it.. embrace it.. discard it..."

ON BACK OF DREW'S RENTAL CAR

moving out, leaving our camera behind.

DREW
"... *and* proceed."

THE MAP

in his hands.

DREW
(reading her words)
"Here is a river leading to the Mississippi."

SHOT SWIVELS

to see the beautiful river.

EXT. BRIDGE ABOVE MISSISSIPPI – DAY

Drew drops a pinch of ashes from an overpass, down into legendary waters.

DREW'S VOICE

The map was full of strange side-trips too. "This is America," she wrote, "and if everybody gets a vote where *their* Mitch gets buried, here are a few where *my* Mitch gets buried... or scattered. These are treasures that I will share only with you...

ON A DINOSAUR PARK

in Carolina. Drew stands in the midst of these hand-made statues.

DREW'S VOICE

"A dinosaur park built over thirty years by a Christian sculptor who grappled with the story of creation, and yet still built dinosaurs...

ON AN ORNATE DINOSAUR

full of fiery detail.

DREW'S VOICE

"... though in a strict Scripture sense... dinosaurs didn't exist... this was *his* dilemma... those were the hell-hounds on *his* particular trail..."

ON JESUS STATUE

who welcomes all to the Dinosaur Park with arms outstretched.

DREW

What the hell. He liked dinosaurs.

Drew releases several more pinches of ashes.

INT. RESTAURANT – DAY

We sit with Drew in a restaurant, silent, facing out the window.

DREW'S VOICE
"Pause for thirty minutes for the greatest chili in the world."
(pause)
And in Memphis...

We hear Claire's next musical selection, which offers soulful counterpoint to...

SHOTS OF MEMPHIS

ON LORRAINE MOTEL

DREW'S VOICE
(reading her words)
"... the Lorraine Motel, the hotel balcony where Martin Luther King drew his last breath..."

Drew scoops out more of the ashes from the Purple Urn. (It's still rather full.)

EXT. HILLSIDE – DAY

Drew burns across the highway, heading West.

DREW'S VOICE
"... and, in a sentimental mood, you can't leave out the Survivor Tree in Oklahoma City... still standing after that blast."

ON THE SURVIVOR TREE

The single tree is now a monument at the Oklahoma City Bombing memorial. Drew scoops out another handful of ashes. And another handful. (The Urn is *still* very full.)

THE MAP

Instrumental reprise of Claire's theme.

INT. DREW'S RENTAL CAR – LATE NIGHT

Drew at the wheel. Driving, listening to another of her songs. Somehow on his late night, at this exact moment, the visual and the audio blend... and it sounds perfect. *How did she know?*

DREW'S VOICE
But she would not break me down.

INT. DREW'S RENTAL CAR – LATE NIGHT

Drew brings a coffee cup to his mouth, and when it reaches his mouth...

INT. DREW'S RENTAL CAR – EARLY MORNING

Drew drives, sips. It's early morning. Claire's geographically correct selection – Glen Campbell's "Witchita Lineman."

DREW'S VOICE
Like a dime-store kaleidoscope, everything was twisting into sharp focus.

ON PASSING SIGN

reading: Witchita, Kansas. In the background, the rolling Kansas landscape.

DREW'S VOICE
They say near the end, a killer can think of nothing else but the act of killing. I stalked my prey and kept him close, and back home, I would make my move.

INT. DREW'S RENTAL CAR – DRIVING – EARLY MORNING

He locks at the Urn, riding alongside.

DREW
(plain truth, to Urn)
You with your many almost great projects, and me with my... *fiasco*.

SHOT OF URN

closer.

DREW
Both of us working so hard... for what?

SHOT OF URN

bouncing agreeably.

DREW
We should have taken this trip *years ago*!
(beat, like a son)
Do you have any money? I'm scared to use my credit card –

EXT. GAS STATION – DAY

Drew's road-dusted car pulls into a Kansas gas station.

INT. DREW'S RENTAL CAR – DAY

Drew looks in his backpack and finds his father's Brown Wallet. There is $120 inside. He takes sixty bucks.

DREW
Thanks Dad.

He takes a breath, and actually finally considers crying. He decides against it.

INT. SEVEN-ELEVEN – DAY

Drew pays for gas. Feeling bad about spending his father's last money, he turns to see two awkward-looking Boys, about 12, standing at the counter with ornate Slurpees. Drew's eyes travel down. Both wear Spasmotica shoes. Drew looks concerned. *Is it a mirage?*

WIDE - SHOT

The car continues against the sky, with music. Drew continues, road-weary and suspicious.

DREW'S VOICE
In a mall in Kansas, the strangely similar sight was repeated.

INT. MALL – AFTERNOON

Drew notices another pair of Spasmotica shoes walking the other way. Music continues.

DREW'S VOICE
The Spasmotica had begun to appear like taunting demons... wherever I went.

He sits, watching, puzzled.

SHOTS OF SHOES

groups of feet, and the increasingly plentiful sight of Spasmoticas. Drew's cell-phone rings.

DREW
Hello?

INTERCUT:

INT. TAIWAN OFFICE MERCURY SHOES – NIGHT

David Tan, Drew's Taiwanese counterpart, is on the phone. (We see the top of his head.)

DAVID TAN
Drew, it's David Tan... listen to me... my heart is beating so fast... 79% of the recalls were rejected by 92% of the outlet stores in 72% of the global... forget it, forget it... I was re-instated this morning!

Drew sits listening to his manic and happy Taiwanese counterpoint.

DAVID TAN
It's a revolution, man!

DREW'S VOICE
(very serious, disbelieving)
The Spasmotica was finding love. Love in the hearts of people... okay, mostly young kids.... who apparently found my billion dollar, girlfriend destroying, global merger wrecking, walking-on-a-cloud *curiosity*...

The shoes are everywhere. Drew stands, trying to process it all.

DREW'S VOICE
... profound.

DAVID TAN
Can you hear me? *They are recalling the recall.*

DREW
(dazed)
How's the weather?

DAVID TAN
(laughing)
Who knows, man. I'm walking on a cloud!
It's a Spasmotica World! I'm going to yell
for joy now, so get ready. AAARRRRRHH!:

Drew hangs up, stunned and almost delirious. He lingers a beat. It's a curious sensation, beginning in his chin, and slowly moving across his face. He begins to cry. It's all coming out now. He hugs a Stranger wearing the shoes.

DREW
*Where did you find them?*

MAN
It wasn't easy.

PASSING SHOT OF HUGE LANDSCAPE

Music continues.

INT. DREW'S RENTAL CAR – DAY

Drew takes big gulps of air as he drives, still crying. Looking over at the Purple Urn. Trying to read her map:

DREW'S VOICE
"Don't get lost. Go to Exit 52A from I-42C.
You are now entering Scottsbluff, Nebraska...

ON PASSING SIGN

reading: Scottsbluff, Nebraska. "Come Experience The Difference."

DREW'S VOICE
"... where a fur trapper with a great name -- Hiram
Scott – gained immortality by dying, alone and
deserted by his companions...

ON DREW

parked again. Reading the map and her words carefully. He looks up at the very bluffs she's writing about.

DREW'S VOICE
"... at the base of a magnificent formation of bluffs along the North Platte River in 1828.

PASSING FORMATION

The bluffs are just as powerful as her words.

DREW'S VOICE
"That was *his* cross to bear. But this many years later, they're all forgotten, and what's left is what you see, everything, named after the guy they abandoned....

EXT. MOUNTAINS – DAY

Drew stands at the spot.

DREW'S VOICE
... at this very spot."

DREW
Hiram. Meet Mitch.

Drew spreads the most ashes yet.

EXT DREW'S RENTAL CAR – DAY

Ashes fly from the driver's window, spraying against the sky.

INT. DREW'S RENTAL CAR – DRIVING – DAY

Drew drives.

DREW'S VOICE
"Proceed to the The Second Largest Farmer's Market in the World, located on The Second Largest Country Store in the World Boulevard, for some essentials for the rest of your journey home. It should now be about 12:30."

He looks at his watch. 2:30 pm. He's late.

ON PASSING SIGN

"The Second Largest Farmer's Market in the World."

EXT. SECOND LARGEST FARMER'S MARKET IN THE WORLD – AFTERNOON

Drew pulls into the parking lot. The Farmer's Market is three-stories, and one enormous block-long. He looks at the latest installment of Claire's instructions.

DREW'S VOICE

Go to the Pet Area...

INT. SECOND LARGEST FARMER'S MARKET IN THE WORLD – AFTERNOON

Drew walks forward. The Farmer's Market is immense, a museum of Americana.

DREW'S VOICE

"Look inside the book about Springer Spaniels, with a yellow piece of paper, and your future directions."

INT. PET AREA – AFTERNOON

Curiously, Drew reaches for the book about Springer Spaniels. A yellow note reads:

DREW

Go to the Shoe Area.

ON HIS FEET

walking down the circular ramp to the Shoe Area.

INT. SHOE AREA – DAY

He enters the shoe area.

DREW'S VOICE

"Find a pair of Spasmoticas on display, the last pair in town, and look inside...

He finds the pair of Spasmotica shoes on display, and looks inside.

ON A POLAROID

of him in the Pet area a moment earlier. He know she's close. He looks around. His adrenalin is pumping. Is she here? *She has to be.* He finds another note.

DREW'S VOICE
"Here you have reached a fork in the map. You can go to your car and the rest of the directions will take you home. Or...

POV

He looks around. She's nowhere in sight.

ON CIRCULAR STAIRCASE

running, looking for her.

DREW'S VOICE
"... look for a girl in a red hat who's waiting for you with an alternate plan.

ON DREW

Standing in the middle of the busy store. *Where is she?*

DREW'S VOICE
"Your decision will affect your entire life, and how you live it."

He stands there in the crowded store, looking to the right and left. A red shawl. A red baseball cap. A red shirt... none of them Claire.

ON DREW

growing desperate to find her. He knows it now. He needs her, craves her with every breath in his body. And yet... in the teeming humanity that surrounds him... nothing...

ON A SMALL COFFEE STAND – THE INSTANT

He sees her.... or maybe it's her. In a seat at the bottom of a small staircase. She sits in a red wool hat, quietly facing away. He approaches behind her, and she turns.

ON CLAIRE

looking at him, as if for the first time.

Drew responds like a man awakening. He moves to her, and kisses her fiercely. He starts to speak in a voice shaken with quiet emotion. His soul is filled with life. And she is curious and surprised to hear these words coming from him.

DREW
I don't know if Ben even existed. I don't want to know. I love you, Claire. A whole dark chapter of my life is over now, because of you...

HIGH ANGLE

as he kisses her, and they stand together in the crowded flow of life.

DREW
... you ruined all my plans, and I want to do the same for you.

DREW'S VOICE
No true fiasco ever began as a quest for mere *adequacy*...

Suddenly we hear a *huge*, rocking roar of planes. And we break form to show the following glimpses of oddly unstoppable successes.

ON A FLEET OF BRITISH PLANES

thundering across the sky.

DREW'S VOICE
The motto of the British Special Service Air Force is – "Those who risk, win."

POV -- A DETERMINED PILOT

in the cockpit. Looking out at geography below.

DREW'S VOICE
A single green vine-shoot is able to grow through cement...

ON A TINY GREEN VINE

emerging through the smallest crack of inhospitable cement.

DREW'S VOICE
The Pacific Northwestern Salmon beats itself bloody on it's quest to travel hundreds of miles upstream, against the current, with a single purpose... *sex, of course*, but also...

ON THE SALMON

rumbling against the current, upstream.

DREW'S VOICE
... life.

As CREDITS begin to roll unobtrusively, we now hear a voice we haven't heard before.

MAN'S VOICE
That is quite a story...

EXT. DREW'S APARTMENT – DAY

Drew's apartment.

Title: Two Months Later

INT. DREW'S APARTMENT – DAY

We see how the apartment has changed. A woman's touch is in evidence. A single Spasmotica poster remains, but in an entirely new context.

DREW
Some more wine, Ben?

And we see **BEN**, pleasant-looking, 28, offering a wine glass. Drew pours. Claire sits between them. Content and excited to be with both of them.

BEN
Thanks... that's amazing... and that's how you met.

DREW
That's how we met.

Claire rubs each of their arms, lovingly. Ben takes a last sip of wine.

BEN
She's very inspiring. But then – I'm partial. I'm her brother.
(beat, confides)
She used me as protection for *years*. For every guy on a plane who ever wanted to pick her up.

CLAIRE
Please. I threw myself at him.

Drew looks at Claire. Claire smiles to herself and looks down..

DREW
And to think, on a dark night not so long ago, I almost missed meeting both of you.,

Ben rises, and we see the exercise bike near the door.

BEN
Well, thanks for the exercise bike. I might have a problem getting that to my car.

CLAIRE
(rising)
If it wasn't this, it'd be something else.

DREW
Here, I'll help –

The three grapple with the unwieldy bicycle, now toothless and knife-free, attempting to find a way to angle it through the narrow door.

BEN
There's got to be a way to get this out the door? I mean, you got it *in*..

CLAIRE
Here, try it at this angle --

DREW
Okay, wait, I got it –

CLAIRE
Drew, you can't do everything yourself --

BEN
Push to the left – wait, it's slipping --

DREW
It's alright, we have it –

CLAIRE
I *knew* you guys would get along.

BEN
(with hands full)
You sure you want to give this up?

DREW
– take it. I actually think it's good luck.

Their conversation continues as they ease it out the door, credits continuing, and we hear them, almost dropping that bike, narrowly avoiding disaster, off-screen now, laughing, as we....

FADE TO BLACK

**THE END**